

COLOUR PERSONAL COMPUTING



Issue 1—Winter 2016/17

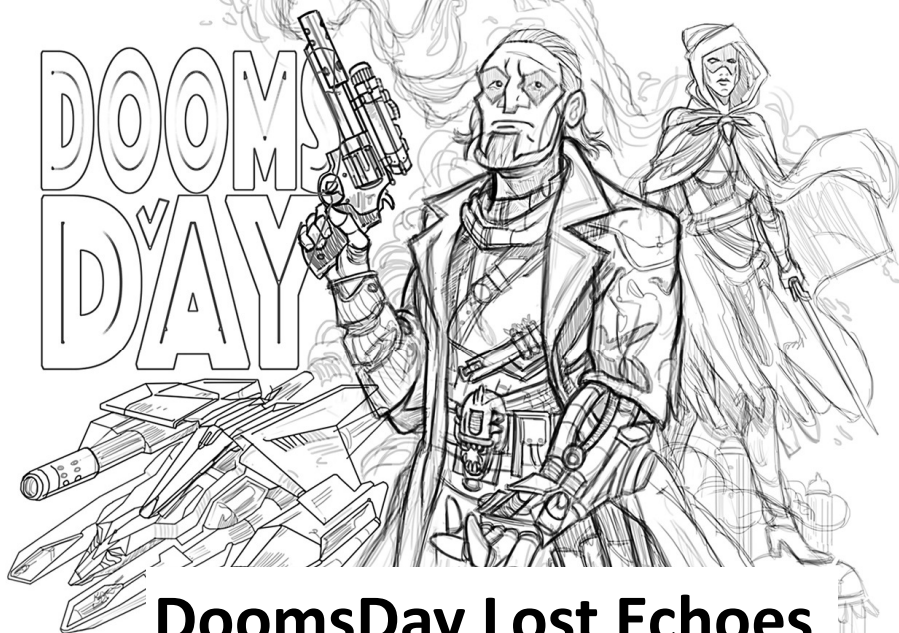
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Toilet reading for your Amstrad Colour Personal Computer



DoomsDay Lost Echoes

Review & developer interview inside!

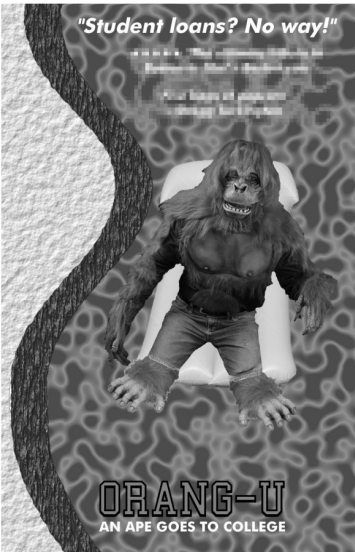
Plus:

Reviewed: Golden Tail, A Prelude To Chaos, Jewel Warehouse & many more!

Features: The GX4000's revenge, CPC expansions, floppy drive emulators and more!

THIS IS A FULL PAGE AD FOR A MONKEY MOVIE

Orang-U: An Ape Goes To College comes out in March. It's a feature length movie with real actors that you can edit and remix yourself. We've spent the last two years putting it all together and you'll soon see the results. In the meantime, check out orangumovie.com and look at some photos from the movie below. Enjoy.



These are
YouTube
channels to
subscribe to:

ChinnyVision
elmyrdehory
GigerPunk
hellfire64
nobmouse
Novabug
Larry
ashens



have you heard of CPCtelera? an integrated development for the CPC? It's licensed under the LGPL and works cross-platform!



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The dawn of the CPC. *silliness alert*

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Editor—James Ford

Staff Writer—James Ford

Art Editor—James Ford

Production Editor—James Ford

Publisher—James Ford

Tea-boy—James Ford

With thanks to— My wife Maria (for all her love and support), Juan J. Martinez and Alberto Riera (for agreeing to interviews, all the folks at the CPC Wiki for their help and advice and all of the Kickstarter backers for their patience!

Front cover image— Doomsday: Lost Echos concept art drawn by Dani.

Advertisers - MattL, Mr Lou, Roland Radio

Web: <http://www.cpcfanzine.com/>

E-mail: editor@cpcfanzine.com



Genesis



In a distant galaxy, a long, long time ago (Brentwood, Essex in the early 1980's), one man had a dream. A dream to star in a BBC reality TV series about a bunch of nobodies who think they might be somebody.

But to achieve that, he was first going to have to build a computer (in seven days... (it's best not to ask)).

On the first day, the Lord (Sugar) created the plastic casing out some old hi-fi moulds that had gone out of shape in the sun. And it was good. He made some of the keys different colours to remind us that we are in fact individuals, unique and special in our own way. On day two he thought he should probably put something into that case. So on day three he got on the dog & bone (blower) to his technical wizards and ordered a generous portion of chips to place inside. On day four the chips arrived, and he carefully open the casing and poured them inside. On day five, he picked it up and gave it a good shake to let everything mix together. On day six, he got hold of a cut-price batch of tape drives, and shoved them on the side with PVA glue. And on day seven, he rested and admired what he had achieved.

The catchily-titled Alan Michael Sugar Trading Colour Personal Computer four-hundred and sixty-four launched to great fanfare in a year that was named after the title of a novel. However, he did not want to push his creation out into the world alone. So he created a second computer out of an additional 200 that he had lying around, the six-hundred and sixty-four which came complete with a floppy drive instead of a tape one.

With a whopping 64Kilobytes of Random Access Memory, the world would surely tremble in their presence. And it did, for here was a computer that would not disturb the holy television, as it came with its own monitor. Little Johnny's parents were delighted, as was little Johnny as he was discovering all of the incredible titles that Amsoft had to offer. However, Lord Alan did not rest on his laurels. The siblings had been well received but the big daddy of the series was

still to come, and this time there were some serious numbers involved. The six-thousand, one-hundred and twenty-eight hit the shelves in nineteen-eighty-five and featured as much memory as a four-hundred and sixty-four and a six-hundred and sixty-four added together. It was to quote Shakespeare, 'da bomb'.

Everyone lived quite happily until, one cold spring day in 1995 darkness suddenly descended upon the world. The holy book was no more. Print publications had been banned and the bastion of all knowledge, Amstrad Action was plunged deep into the ocean, never to return. Most of the crew and passengers jumped ship, drowning in the ocean



until they were rescued. Some were picked up by the vessel 'Amiga' only for that boat to sink shortly afterwards. Those that boarded the vessel 'PC' found themselves in a strange world. Discs were round and shiny, or hard and spelt with a 'K'. People spoke an entirely different language and kept mumbling something about 'interwebs'. Life was tough and the Lord was too busy selling satellite dishes out of his car boot to tend to his flock.

However, the people gradually settled into their new way of life and the world carried on spinning, as it often does with their previous existence nothing but a distant, fading memory.

Fast-forward to the year of our Lord (Sugar), 2016 and things have changed. The Lord is now actually a Lord, a major TV celebrity, and continuing in the footsteps of Donald Trump (Esq), potentially the next President of the World.

And one of the survivors from the good ship Amstrad Action, a mere boy at the time it sank is building a new vessel to lead the followers into a second coming. That boy is me, James Ford, and that vessel is 'Colour Personal Computing'. Goodnight.



A word from the editor

If you are reading this, then it means that the Kickstarter campaign was a success and Colour Personal Computing has been brought forth into physical existence in the form of the fanzine that you are holding right now. Or, it failed miserably and I decided to release the thing as a PDF, in which case you're staring at this on your phablet. Or, if you are reading this in the year 3000 then the earth has most likely been destroyed and this is the last remaining record of human existence. Either way, welcome to the first issue of the fanzine and thank you for your support.

I won't rabbit on for too long here as you've probably already had the displeasure of watching my Kickstarter campaign video (do I sound like that?... Really? And why does the lighting create a second chin?... What? It's hiding the third....? How dare you!). I hope that there will be some stuff of interest inside for you to enjoy, whether you're a CPC veteran who has stuck by through thick and thin, a lapsed user (like myself) returning to the fold or a newcomer who's curious to see what it's all about. It's incredible that more than 30 years after Alan Sugar crafted the first machine by hand from little more than a

piece of oak (Oi! We had enough of that nonsense on the previous page! - the readers) there's still such a vibrant community of users supporting the machine. And as you'll find out there is a lot happening, from great new game releases to new hardware expansions bringing the humble CPC kicking and screaming into the 21st century.

Please let me know your thoughts and feedback on this issue, or if you have any suggestions for content/features for future issues. Or if you want to write content/features for future issues (particularly on game development, I think anyone could improve on my half-arsed feature!). Or if you just want to complain about the hideous lateness of this first issue...

You can always get hold of me by e-mailing editor@cpcfanzine.com, my inbox is always open.

Thanks again, and enjoy the fanzine! (I promise, some of the content will be serious, just ignore the bit below)

James Ford (editor)

10 things you didn't know about....

AMSTRAD ACTION

We all have fond memories of the classic British Amstrad magazine, but did you know these little known facts?

- ♠ Amstrad Action was the first magazine to feature a cover-mounted cassette—it featured James Leach singing terrible covers of Kylie Minogue & Jason Donovan Songs.



- ♠ By the time Future Publishing finally pulled the plug on the magazine it was literally being run by skeleton staff. Future had outsourced the magazine to Zombie Pirate LeChuck's crew, hence the improvement in the standard of writing.

- ♠ Technical editor Richard Fairhurst may be better known to some people as 'CRTC'. There is literally a miniature version of him inside every single Amstrad CPC computer to help out whenever it needs to do something complicated with the screen.



- ♠ As well as Alan Scully writing the PD column, AA also featured game reviews written by Ocean Software & US Gold under various pseudonyms (see the original 'Final Fight' review as an example).

- ♠ Serial letter writer Peter Morley, was in fact none other than Harry Potter author, Emma Watson.



The AA editorial team from the late 1980's
(From right to left: Rod Lawton, Adam Peters, Adam Waring & Tim Blackburn)

- ♠ If you were to unravel all of the cover-mounted cassettes ever attached to the magazine, the tape would circle Uranus seven times.
- ♠ Several of AA's writers were in fact fictional and were simply other members of the team writing under a different name. James Leach, Trenton Webb and Simon Forrester are all entirely made up.
- ♠ Controversy famously struck, when Simon Forrester awarded Elmar Krieger's Prehistorik II a mere 96% in a review. The scene was up in arms at the lameness.

Phil Craven's NEWSROUND

Up-to-the-minute news, direct to your door, quarterly.



#CPCRetroDev 2016—The Results

The marvellous #CPCRetroDev game creation contest was held once again, bigger and better than ever. For those unfamiliar, this is an annual content organised by Ronaldo (aka Francisco Gallego) of the University of Alicante and has been running since 2013. What started as a small Spanish competition, has developed into a worldwide phenomenon with a huge 34 entries this year. Disappointingly, the announcement of the Oliver Twins leading the judging panel didn't lead to a flood of Dizzy clones but nevertheless, there were some fantastic games submitted. So, to the results:

Pro category – 1st Place: Outlaws (RetroBytes)

Pro category – 2nd Place: Hire Hare (CNG Soft)

Pro category – 3rd Place: Virus Dog (CPC-Power)

John Ritman mention: Hire Hare (CNG Soft)

Cátedra Santander-UA Innovative Game Development

Mention: Dragon Attack

Cátedra Santander-UA Engaging Gameplay: Hair-Boy

BASIC category winner: El Reino Del Color

We've played all of them and we'll be letting you know some of our own thoughts in the next issue.

The World Weary Warrior

Street Fighter II – CPC edition was first announced in 2013, after an earlier mock-up video by DaDMaN using the CPC's palette and video mode had drawn lots of attention (or sent the internet into meltdown, depending on who you speak to). After a period of relative quietness, Augusto Ruiz has released a new video of the game and it's clear that there's been a lot of work going on behind the scenes.

The latest video on Youtube reveals the AI implementation, showing two computer-controlled characters fighting against each other. It looks amazing, putting the other 8-bit versions to shame (except perhaps the PC Engine/TG-16 port, if you even count that as 8-bit).

Brought to you by Augusto Ruiz (programming), David

Donaire (DaDMaN) (gfx) and McKlain (music).

Street Fighter II is seen by many as the one that got away, with AA teasing a release for so long that never came to

pass. When this port is complete it will make a lot of CPC users teenage dreams come true. Although no release date is set, we're sure more of the game will be revealed as the year progresses.

Dreams can come true

If like me, you spent a large chunk of your youth either playing actual pinball or a computer representation of pinball then you'll be very excited to hear about this upcoming game. Batman Group, who were behind the superb 2011 demo Amiga Forever are returning with a conversion of Amiga pinball game, Pinball Dreams. The



game will allegedly use 40% of the potential of the CPC since most commercial Amstrad games only ever used 10%. I can only imagine that this conversion must be Amiga-perfect (or better!), otherwise I'll be asking questions about why they didn't use the remaining 60%! An impressive preview of the game has now been released which you can download from [http://](http://www.pouet.net/prod.php?which=68387)

www.pouet.net/prod.php?which=68387 - We'll have more coverage next issue!

Chick, chick, chick, chick, Cyber Chicken

A commercial game released in 2013 that was limited to 111 copies (all of which were sold), TFM has now very kindly made Cyber Chicken available for download for free. Originally created as Cyber Huhn for CPCWiki's 16KB ROM game development competition, this version is significantly extended. If, like me you missed out on the opportunity to buy this when it was available, now is the time. It's a space shooter with impressively smooth 360° scrolling. If all goes to plan we should have a review of the game next issue. Visit: <http://www.cc-cpc.de/site/index> for more details.

Walk like, an eight-bit-ion

CPC-related publications are like buses, you wait ages for

one and then two come along at once. Eight Bit Magazine covers other 8-bit machines and the second issue has just been released and it's well worth a read (they were much more on time than us!).

Check out <http://www.eightbitmagazine.com/>

YANCC-ee doodle dandy

With Mass-storage devices becoming more commonplace on the CPC, the ability to manage files and directories effectively has risen in importance. Luckily this is where Yet-Another-Norton-Command-Clone (YANCC) comes in. It is a file management tool in the style of Norton Commander and supports ACME-DOS for handling mass-storage devices (as well as M4-DOS when available). Available only as a ROM image, you'll need a ROM-board or a device like the X-MEM to use this utility (or an emulator I suppose, sigh..), and you have the option of auto-booting when you switch on the CPC or loading manually with the |YANCC command.

It follows the standard format set my Norton Commander of having two directory windows visible, to easily see your source and target folders when required.

With it you can copy, rename files and delete files or directories, view files as text,

There's a small bug in the current version that could put your data at risk, so please read the warning section of the readme file first!

8-bit Memoirs

As advertised in this very issue, 8-bit Memoirs is a forthcoming discmag-style Blu-ray disc, featuring a collection of retro-computing stories by Mr Lou, a long-time CPC user from Denmark. Previously known as '8-bit Stories', it is intended to be the first of a series, with each one featuring a different curator sharing their memories of their early computing experiences. It's a big project and should hopefully come to fruition in 2017. Visit: <http://www.8bitmemoirs.com>

Super Roland Bros(?!)

More than a year ago now, a video was released on Youtube showing the first level from the original Super Mario Bros. level scrolling sideways on a CPC 464. As well could be expected, this sparked a pandemic of fizzy knickers at the thought of a full Super Mario game on the CPC. The programmer behind it, one Gianpaolo Ingegneri has announced that he's still working on turn this into a playable game and has released a second (and third! (and fourth!!)) video show Mario jumping around the level. It's certainly whet our appetite for a Super Mario game on the CPC, although it's been suggested that Mario should be replaced



with Roland to avoid any comeuppance from Nintendo. Fingers crossed that a game comes out of this, that would be impressive indeed!

SymbOS 3.0 RC1

As the release of version 3.0 of this superb operating system draws ever closer, a new work-in-progress release of SymbOS 3.0 has been released. SymbOS has come an awfully long way since Prodatron started development back in 2000. This latest preview features support for Widgets, and faster booting speed amongst several bugfixes. The OS now supports the Wi-Fi functionality of the M4Board meaning that you can finally chat away on IRC about the CPC, directly from your CPC! We'll be covering this OS in detail once version 3.0 is out.

<http://www.symbos.org/download/preview-cpc161114.zip>

Phoenix nights

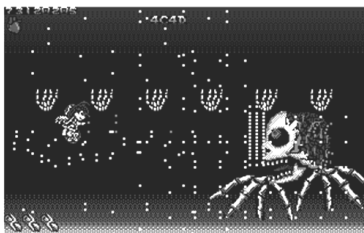
In what's becoming a recent trend (that we really like!) an emulator (of sorts) for the classic Arcade game 'Phoenix' has been released for the CPC. The game is a classic space shooter released in 1980 by Amstar electronics. Two versions are available to suit all tastes, low-res 16 colour or high (er)-res 4 colour – one is more faithful to the original in terms of resolution and the other in terms of colour. The choice as they say, is yours! For more details and to download visit:

<http://members.aon.at/~nkehrer/>

A-Chibi Akuma, what a wonderful game

Appearing almost out of nowhere, just in time for the new year is this 'comedy-horror' shooter. Inspired by bullet-hell shooters such as Deathsmiles, Chibi Akuma is available now for the 6128/6128+. The mention of the + is significant, on a Plus machine the game features 16 colour sprites. Regardless of which machine you're on there are up to an incredible 255 bullets on-screen at one time! Developed by Keith who resides all the way over in Japan, we're just about to get our teeth sunk into this one and will be providing a review for issue 2. As you can see from the screenshot it looks absolutely manic!

Check out <http://www.chibiakumas.com/>



21st Century Floppy

Part One—An introduction to the world of floppy emulators and the different solutions available



An age old problem...

If there has ever been a weak spot in what has proven to be a spectacularly reliable range of computers from Amstrad, it has to be that quirky 3-inch disk drive.

Whilst many of the disks themselves have done remarkably to survive more than 20 years since production was ceased, the drives themselves are prone to disintegrating drive belts and any Amstrad CPC user worth their salt has had to replace a few by now. Non-standard, with disks costing more five times those other formats, limited in storage space (and supply); it's no wonder that CPC users began to look elsewhere for their storage needs.

A popular option for CPC users has been to hook-up a 3.5" disk drive, giving access to cheaper disks and allowing larger storage formats. It also enabled easier transferring software from the PC, opening up the wealth of software available on the internet (once invented). However, even the 3.5" floppy's days are numbered. For a long time, new PC's have shipped without floppy drives and external USB drives prove troublesome as they a) don't work with a CPC and b) barely work for transferring CPC files when connected to a PC. The disks themselves are becoming scarcer and prices are slowly starting to creep up (although thankfully not to 3" levels quite yet). Transferring software from the wealth available on the internet to a real CPC has always been a bit of a pain, but in the days where PC's have shunned the floppy in favour of far more modern storage formats it's not really convenient anymore.

A modern solution...

There are some fantastic storage solutions available for the CPC (such as the X-Mass, mentioned elsewhere in this issue), but many games and demos often feature unusual formats and copy protection and really need to run from an actual disk... Or do they? Disk images have been used to store a replica of a CPC floppy in a single file for more than 20 years now, ever since the first CPC emulators began to appear in the early 1990s, and they support pretty much all of the weird and wonderful disk formats out there. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just plug in an SD-card/USB drive full of disk images into a CPC and use them as if they were a

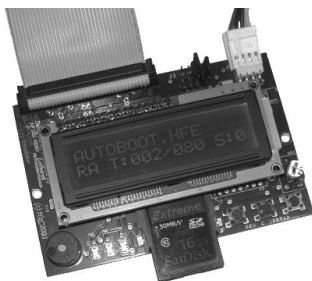
real disk? Well, luckily enough that is exactly what floppy disk emulators enable you to do, and it's all thanks to a man called Jeff.

The story of the HxC

Jeff (aka Jean-François DEL NERO) designed the original HxC device back in 2006. The first prototype communicated to a PC via the parallel port to access a disk image like a real floppy, changing to a USB connection in the second revision. The image would be selected via a piece of software on the PC, but would appear to the ST/Amiga like an actual floppy disk. At this point the board was not commercially produced, but Jeff released the schematic so that people could build their own devices.

In 2008, mass production of the USB version started with the boards being available to purchase for the first time. It was a great success with more than 100 sold in the first year.

Something very important also happened around this time. Jeff added support for DSK files, enabling the use of the devices on our favourite machine! He also started work on a stand-alone version that didn't require a host PC, loading images directly from an SD card inserted into the device.



This version became available for the first time in 2010, and was soon followed by a version that was mountable in a 3.5" drive bay. Things went from great to even better when the HxC Floppy Emulator Manager software was released. This allowed the disk images to be selected directly from a menu on the CPC, rather than tapping buttons on the front of the drive. The original version was coded by Jeff himself, but since then has been rewritten by NoRecess and is even available as a ROM for ultimate convenience, with the |HXC command

available on-tap from the BASIC prompt.

Naturally, with a product in demand it wasn't long before rival products appeared on the market. Devices labelled 'Gotek Floppy emulators' began to appear on eBay for rock-bottom prices, often direct from China. These devices were initially far more limited in their capabilities in comparison with the HxC, intended for markets other than retro-computing (such as sewing/embroidery machines!) but suitable nonetheless. Rather than an SD card, they have a USB port enabling you to plug-in in a thumb drive or even an external hard drive.

FEATURE

Lesser men may have been annoyed by the competition encroaching on his turf, but not Jeff. He saw an opportunity and created a special version of the HxC firmware for the GoTek drive, bringing its capabilities more in line with the HxC devices. This was released last year at a cost of €10 per device, although the process of flashing the firmware to the device can initially be a little daunting.

Getting started—The Options

So, as we've already established, there is more than one way to skin a cat, or indeed to emulate a floppy drive (more on skinning cats next issue). The option that you choose may come down to where your priorities lie, are you looking for cost or convenience? Do you mind rolling up your sleeves and getting hands on with a soldering iron? Or would you prefer a solution that lets you just plug in and go? Read on, and we'll tell you a little more about the different options and take you through the steps of getting a GoTek drive up and running.

To put it bluntly, purchasing a HxC device is more straightforward but more expensive, purchasing a GoTek device is cheaper but a bit more fiddly to get up and running as it involves flashing the HxC firmware to the device via a serial port.

There is a third option however. A young Polish fellow by the name of Piotr Bugaj (aka Zaxon), has produced some floppy emulator hardware based on the GoTek design, but tailored specifically for the CPC (ok, and the Speccy). He rose to prominence a couple of years ago with a DDI-1 clone (the interface that lets 464 users connect a floppy drive) and

has since produced several different floppy emulators. The Zaxon 6128 hooks straight onto the back of the CPC via the disk drive connector, the Zaxon 3-inch fits snugly in the internal drive bay replacing the internal drive and the Zaxon DDI3 464 combines a DDI-1 interface and a floppy emulator onto a single board. A big plus-point of the 6128 & 464 drives is their small footprint, as they attach vertically directly to the floppy/expansion port. This does leave the bare board visible though and with a USB drive connected may look a little untidy. Our friends over at indieretronews.com have done some great reviews of all three devices so I'd recommend popping over there to check them out. A word of warning: since these devices are a little more uncommon, not so much information/documentation is available on them should you run into issues. Being a homebrew device and not produced on a commercial scale, the build quality is not as high as the HxC or GoTek drives. Also, availability can be limited as he's producing these in his spare time. Check out <https://www.sellmyretro.com/user/profile/zaxon/> to see what is currently available.

So those are your options. If you're a 464 user without a DDI-1 interface already, then the Zaxon DDI3 device definitely makes the most sense—you can't connect any of the other devices directly. For the rest of you, any of the options are good ones and the choice really comes down to personal preference. Over the page, is a guide to getting up and running with a GoTek device, a process I went through a couple of months ago and whilst it wasn't 100% hassle-free I'm more than happy with the end result.

Device	Available from	Price	Extras required	Screen	Disk image support	Media support
GoTek	eBay	~£10-15 inc. shipping	HxC firmware (€10), PSU, floppy cable	2-digit LED	.HFE* (with HxC firmware)	USB drive
HxC Rev C	lotharek.pl	€69.99 (~£61)	PSU, floppy cable	16x2 LCD display	.HFE*	SD card
HxC Slim (no LCD)	lotharek.pl	€55 (~£48)	PSU, floppy cable	n/a	.HFE*	SD card
Zaxon 6128	www.sellmyretro.com	£29.99 + shipping	PSU	n/a	.HFE*	USB drive
Zaxon DDI3 464	www.sellmyretro.com	£52.99 + shipping		16x2 LCD display	.HFE*	USB drive
Zaxon 3-inch USB	www.sellmyretro.com	£37.99 + shipping		16x2 LCD display	.HFE*	USB drive

HxC Floppy Emulator Manager

While some other, less prominent computing formats have to make do with manically stabbing the buttons on their floppy emulator looking for the right image, we CPC users have a far more sophisticated option. The HxC Floppy Emulator Manager by NoRecess lets you assign disk images to the slots on the device (the alternative is to rename the files to begin with the number slot that you want). It really

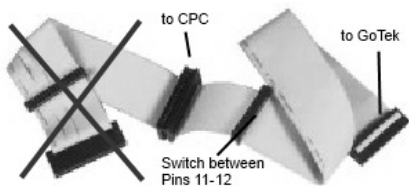
enhances the use of the floppy emulator and provides a quick and user-friendly method for assigning the disk images. Impressively it supports long filenames and complicated directory structures. The only real advice on using it, is to keep the number of images per folder to a minimum to keep things ticking over at a decent speed. The CPC is only so quick you know!

Going the GoTek route

So, you've decided that saving a few quid is worth the extra hassle and you've decided to get yourself a GoTek drive? In that case, read on....We're assuming that you're going to use the GoTek as an external drive via the external drive connector. It is possible to install internally as a replacement for the 3" drive, although a bit of modification may be required to fit it into the case. And you need to be careful using the CPC's internal floppy power connector as the pins are NOT wired in the normal way and you could damage the GoTek drive.

What you will need:

- **GoTek drive** - eBay—£10-15 inc. shipping—There's lots available on eBay and most should be suitable for use on your CPC. As standard, they tend to appear as 720k or 1.44MB devices but as the only difference is the firmware (which you will overwrite) either will do. Search for 'SFR1M44-U100'. 'K' version or not does not matter. Some unscrupulous sellers may be asking for £20 or more, just say no! Available in black or white as desired.
- **Floppy cable**—You can use a standard PC floppy cable easily on a non-Plus as long as it has the card-edge connector, but you'll want to install a switch to enable



you to use the drive as drive A: when required (although this will disable the internal drive). Maplin sell a floppy cable for £1.99 that is fit for purpose (Code: DG41U). Snip off the side with the twist, leaving the edge connector and two 34 pin floppy connectors. The far connector plugs into your CPC. On the middle-connector attach a cheap 2.54mm pitch slide switch (e.g. 76-0300 from Rapid Electronics, 34p) between pins 11 and 12 to switch the external drive to A:. The Gotek provides a ready signal so you don't need to 'fake it'.

Alternatively, sellers **ikonsgr74** and **urban-retro** on eBay both sell cables pre-tailored for around a tenner, including ones with a Centronics connector for 6128 Plus machines.

- **USB to TTL cable/adaptor**—eBay—Used to program the HxC firmware to the device. These can be picked up for £2-3 on eBay.
- **Power supply**—The Gotek requires a 5V power-supply via a standard floppy power connector (known as a Berg or Mini-molex connector). You could use an old PC PSU



My pride and joy

but it's not a particularly elegant solution. We solved this issue by purchasing an external hard-drive enclosure including PSU for a tenner and then buying a Molex->Berg adapter (aka Hard drive->floppy power adapter) for around £2, both on eBay. This gave us both a PSU and a case that we could use for the HxC. Alternatively both **urban-retro** and **ikonsgr74** mentioned above sell solutions such as a Y-adaptor cable for regular CPC's that steals power from the monitors 5V output to connect to the back of the drive. **ikonsgr74** can even do one with a floppy cable for around £12.

- **A USB memory stick**—You have more than likely already got a suitable one lying around.
- **HxC Firmware for GoTek**—You'll need to purchase a licence to use the HxC firmware on the GoTek. This costs €10 and is available by sending an e-mail to Jeff at hxc2001@hxc2001.com
Once you've purchased the license, head to hxc2001.com and download the following software:
- **USB STM32 HxCFloppyEmulator firmware upgrade** – latest firmware for the device
- **Online BootLoader programmer** – Software to program firmware to the device



- **HxC FloppyEmulator software v2.1.4.0** - Tool for converting .DSK images to the supported .HFE format)
- **USB HxCFloppyEmulator Manager** – floppy emulator manager for the CPC.

- **Solderless pin headers and jumper wires**—Used during the programming of the HxC firmware to the GoTek device. A couple of quid from an electronics shop or eBay. If you can't find the solderless pin headers then you can either get standard ones and temporarily solder them on, or just use female-male jumper wires with a steady hand (not recommended, but it's what I did). I'd recommend an assortment of colours for the wires to avoid getting confused and connecting the wrong pins!

Total outlay: Around £33-45 depending on some choices along the way, and your ability to nab a bargain. Not bad considering the cheapest HxC is around £48 on its own and you'll still need a cable and PSU for that. Oh, and you'll need a Windows PC to write the custom HxC firmware to the device - add around £500 if you don't have one of those.

What you need to do

So, you've received all of your bits and bobs from eBay, purchased the license for the HxC firmware and now you want to get started. Getting up and going consists of three parts:

Part A: Prepare your USB memory stick

Almost any USB stick should do, but we'd obviously recommend a reliable brand and one with enough storage for your needs (.HFE images are much larger than .DSK's at around a Meg each, a 2GB stick should do for your needs). Copy the firmware file (.UPD file downloaded opposite) and the 'autoboot.hfe' and 'hxcscf.cfg' files from the 'Amstrad CPC' folder in the HxC Floppy Emulator Manager .ZIP file into the root of the drive. You may want to convert a couple of images into .HFE for test purposes using the FloppyEmulator software and put these in a folder called 'Test'.

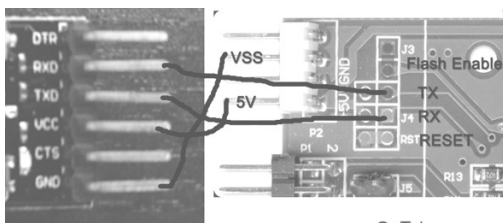
Part B: Updating the device with the HxC firmware

1. It's probably easiest to remove the GoTek board from the casing, to allow easier access to the bits you need. Luckily, there are only three screws to remove and they're easy to access, located on the underside of the device. With the board removed, if you're using pin headers, now is the time to attach/solder these to the 6 contacts highlighted in the image below.

2. Next, you need to hook it up to the PC via the TTL adapter. If your adapter has a 3.3/5V switch, ensure it is set to the '3.3V' position. It's unlikely to break anything as the GoTek should support the higher voltage, but 3.3V is the recommended. Firstly bridge the pins labelled 'Flash Enable' with a jumper or wire and connect the follow cables from the TTL adapter to the GoTek:

VCC -> 5V
GND -> VSS
RXD -> TX
TXD -> RX

3. Plug the TTL adapter into a free USB port on the PC. The device should be recognised and the necessary drivers should install automatically. Run the 'Online Bootloader Programmer' software on the PC, select the COM port number assigned to the adapter and click 'Open'. Enter the server and contact information provided by Jeff followed by the 'Connect!' button. With any luck you should get a 'Link is



TTL Adapter

GoTek

UP!' message which indicates that a connection to the HxC server has been established. The status should change to 'Device Detected' after a few seconds - if it doesn't then double-check your cables and try bridging the pins labelled 'Reset'. Once you get the message, click the 'Program' button, the status will display 'Done' when complete.

4. Once the process is complete, remove all the programming wires, leaving only the VCC and GND pins connected. With any luck the LED display on the GoTek should display 'Ldr' to signal that the device is ready to flash the new firmware. Insert the prepared USB stick into the port on the GoTek. Power up the device while holding both buttons on the drive for a couple of seconds. The flash process should commence and after a few seconds the display will show 'hXc' (or as close as it's numeric display can get to that!).

5. Disconnect the remaining wires (you can leave the pin headers in place if you like for future use) and mount the drive back in its case if required. You now have a GoTek drive that should behave like a HxC device that is ready to attach to your CPC using your floppy and power connectors.

Part C: Hook it up and get going

Connect your floppy drive cable between the drive and your CPC and connect the PSU. Power on the drive followed by the CPC. With any luck you'll get the regular blue-screen and BASIC prompt and not some sort of horrible rolling or corrupt screen - in that case, check your cables!

Type 'lb' and you should not get any errors. Enter 'cat' to get a catalogue of the Floppy Emulator manager disk. Enter 'run" hxc"' and the manager should run, allowing you to assign disk images to the numbered slots. Try assigning the test images you converted and exit back to basic. Pressing the previous/next buttons on the front of the drive will allow you to cycle through the images. Press both buttons to skip back to the autoboot image. You may find that it is a bit limiting as drive B as many games/applications expect to be run from drive A. With the power on, flick the switch on the floppy cable and this should make the GoTek become drive A.: Note: the internal floppy will become disabled. If you want true swapping between A<>B drives you'll need to install an ABBA switch (if you want to take a chance).

As mentioned previously, rather than the standard .DSK format images, HxC devices use the .HFE format. You can use the HxC FloppyEmulator software to convert your images to the required format. Copy these across to your USB drive in your desired folder hierarchy and they're ready to use on the CPC.

Next Issue....

So, with any luck you've managed to get your GoTek drive hooked up to your CPC... Next issue we'll show you how modify your GoTek to include a multi-line LCD display! Exciting time ahead!

The Age of Expansion



The latest hardware bringing your CPC kicking and screaming into the 21st Century...

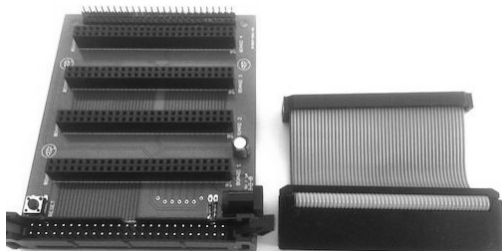
The mid-to-late 1980's are understandably seen as the CPC's golden era. Software houses were pumping out a dozen games each month (admittedly, most were ropery Speccy-ports), applications galore were released for more serious minds and there were all sorts of gadgets and gizmos released to expand the functionality of our favourite 8-bit. Rom boards/boxes, memory expansions, hacking devices, 256k Silicon disks, serial interfaces, Teletext adapters, video digitizers, scanners, light-pens, and mouse adapters to name just a few.

Most of these connected via the CPC's expansion port and some even featured a pass-through connector to allow further devices to be plugged in. Therefore, the most hardcore of CPC users could have a daisy-chain the length of the M1 extending out the back of their machine.

Whilst you could be forgiven for thinking that those glory days are long behind us and there's no new expansions anymore, you couldn't be further from the truth. What if I were to tell that right now is the golden age of CPC expansions? If you're reading fanzine this in order, then you'll have already read about the world of possibilities that a floppy drive emulator opens up, but that's only one part of the picture. A wealth of hardware is available right now that could only be dreamt of 30 years ago. Solid-state drive? Check. RAM/ROM cards using flash memory? Check. Wi-Fi adapter?! Check. And you no longer need 3 metres of space at the back of your CPC to hook all of these up. Some clever people have devised a board that allows multiple expansions to be neatly hooked up to the back of your CPC. And that's what we'll cover first...

Mother X4

The Mother X4, hooks up to the expansion port of the CPC/Plus and provides 4x 50-pin IDC connectors to allow expansion cards to be connected vertically. You can even daisy-chain two together if 4 slots isn't enough for you. Using somewhat standard 50-pin connectors is a good idea. It means that extension cards design for use with the MX-4 can implement a cheap, standard interface rather than sourcing rather more obscure card edge or Centronics connectors. And there's no need for different boards between regular CPC's and Plus



machines. The only different part needed is the cable between the Mother X4 and the CPC. And the pièce de résistance? It includes a reset button, hallelujah!

Multiple expansions can easily drain more power than the CPC can provide, so a power connector is provided for you to hook up a 5V adapter, or steal some power from the monitor.

Available from: <http://www.centpourcent.net>

Price: €14.90 for the board

€4.90 for the cable (+shipping)

X-MASS

Arriving as a timely gift at the end of 2014, the X-MASS embeds a 128MB flash drive bringing the wonderful world of mass storage to the CPC. Impressive transfer speeds of 160KB/s, supported directly from SymbOS, FuturOS and from BASIC via AcmeDOS (requires a ROM expansion such as the X-MEM below).

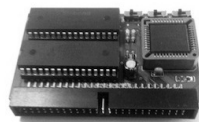
Available from: <http://www.centpourcent.net>

Price: €29.90 + shipping



X-MEM

The X-MEM serves two important functions, a 512K RAM expansion and a 512K ROM expansion allowing up to 32 sideways ROMs at one time. A supporting floppy image of tools is available to support the device, you can even burn ROM images to the device from BASIC via a single CALL. I've got one taking pride of place in my MotherX4 and I



can highly recommend it. I particularly like the on-board switches, with selectable 464/664 or 6128 modes for compatibility, a read-only switch to protect the ROMs, and a boot select switch allowing you to choose whether to boot with the device or not.

Available from: <http://www.centpourcent.net>

Price: €24.90 - €34.90

€4.90 for the cable (+shipping)

M4 Board

Now this is an impressive bit of kit. It's two main functions are providing a Wi-Fi adapter for connecting your CPC to your home network, and a mass storage device using SD cards. As if that wasn't enough it also offers 16 slots for ROM images. A web interface lets you control the device from your browser, enabling you to change settings, switch ROMs and transfer files to and from the SD card. The mass storage is easy to use from BASIC, providing a series of RSX commands harking back to MSDOS such as `|cd`, `|copyf`, `|ren`, `|mkdir` and `|dir`. If you configure an NTP server then you can retrieve the current time from the internet with the command `|time`. Want to download a file directly from the web? No problem... `|httpget,"<url>"` will download the file to the current folder on the SD card. Want to load a file from the web straight into RAM? `|httpmem,"<url>","<address>,<length>"` does the job. The possibilities of this are as varied as your imagination, but the ability to execute code directly from the net could mean that your software is always 'up-to-date'. In fact, upgrading to the latest firmware on the M4 board is as simple as typing `|upgrade`. While there's no web browser available for the CPC yet making use of the Wi-Fi, there is an IRC client! SymIRC for SymbOS lets you connect to IRC servers and partake in such IRC pastimes as camping for hours whilst barely saying a word. We hope to get our hands on one of these boards soon and provide a full write-up of our experiences first-hand.

Available from: Send 'Duke' a Private Message on the CPC Wiki forums

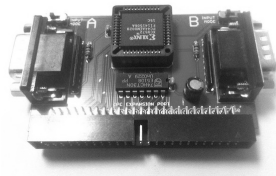
Price: M4 with MX4 connector - €40

M4 with edge connector - €43
(+ shipping)

MultiPlay

This provides two additional 9-pin controller ports, which are usable from BASIC using the `INP()` command. Existing software will need to be modified to take advantage of the board. Each port has a switch, enabling support of Amstrad-

compatible joysticks or Amiga-compatible joysticks and mice. Currently out of stock, but keep an eye on <http://www.centpourcent.net> for availability.



Albireo

The primary function of the Albireo from PulkoTronics is to allow the connection of USB devices to the CPC. But that's not all! It provides support for FAT32 mass storage via USB and a built-in SD card port. A built-in serial port provides communication with other computers and a potential path to the internet. The USB port can be used to attach mice, which SymbOS now supports. This board is definitely one to watch out for as software support continues to improve in the coming months.

Available from: Temporarily unavailable whilst a bug in the serial port is resolved. Fingers crossed it should be available again soon.

Price: €24.90 + shipping. Note: A problem has been found with the serial port on the board, so it may be temporarily unavailable whilst the problem is resolved.

A sad tale....

A lot can happen in a short period of time, particularly when the fanzine that you're trying to get out is taking an awful lot longer than you wanted and real-life gets in the way. So, I'm sorry to say that as of early January it looks like the Cent Pour Cent store will no longer be accepting orders as the talented hardware designer behind it, ToTo has lost his motivation to build new boards. This currently leaves expansions such as the Mother X4, X-MEM, X-MASS and MultiPlay without a source. Hopefully somebody will step in to fill his place, but it's still a big loss to the CPC scene to lose someone of his talent.

Return of The Great White Hope

Why a fantastic new piece of hardware is rewriting the history of the GX4000 (and Plus!)

Back at the tail-end of the 1980s, rumours were circulating that Amstrad were preparing to drop the CPC range and focus on solely on their successful range of PC-compatibles and PCW word processors. As the decade drew to a close, whispers of a new range of computers to replace the CPC could be heard echoing around grapevines everywhere. They would be 16-bit machines to rival the Amiga and ST and much to the horror of existing users, be incompatible with the CPC range.

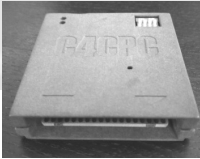
1990 rolled around and with it more details on Amstrad's new machines. What were getting was an enhanced version of the 464 and 6128 (the Plus machines) and a Sega/Nintendo beating console*(the GX4000). They weren't 16-bit after all, featuring the same Z80 processor as the regular CPC models. What they did have however, was an enhanced palette of 4096 colours rather than the regular 27, hardware sprites and scrolling and DMA sound capabilities. Sadly it was too little too late and the Plus/GX4000 machines were only produced for a short period of time before fading away into obscurity.

Anyone with at least three fingers can count the number of decent Plus/GX4000 cartridge releases on one hand. The technology was woefully underused, and many of the titles that did get released were straight ports with little in the way of Plus-specific enhancements. All in all, the cartridge format actually had a lot of potential that was never used. The

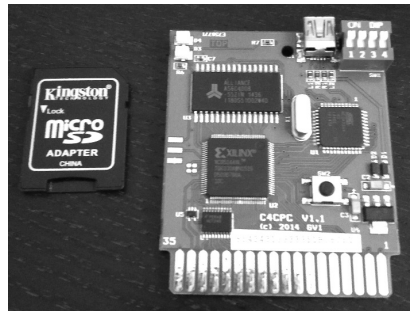
format supported game sizes of up to 512KB(4Mbit, in console terms) and much faster loading than tape or disk. Cost concerns at the time meant that most games were limited to small cart sizes, and because of the limitation some games such as Toki & Space Gun failed to materialise.

Realising that unfulfilled potential is exactly where the C4CPC comes in. This clever bit of kit plugs into the cartridge port of your Plus/GX4000 allowing one of 16 cartridge images to be selected via

DIP switches in the top-right of the device. It uses the same .CPR image format as popular CPC emulators, and these are stored on a MicroSD card to allow easy transfer from your PC. These images can even be system cartridges, meaning that you can select between multiple system carts with combinations of Amsdos, Parados, HXC Floppy Manager etc all ready to go. You're also not limited to the 16 directly-selectable cart images. A nifty tool called 'CprSelect' is included on the default system cart image that lets you select from hundreds of cart images stored on the SD card without shuffling between slots and adjusting the DIP switches. This can be accessed from the BASIC prompt by typing **!C4CPC** and away you go! Copying files back and forth to the MicroSD isn't the only way to load cart images using the device however. Probably intended with developers in mind, the device features a USB port meaning that images can be loaded directly from a connected PC if required. This allows you to quickly build a cart image on your PC during develop-



A .CPR selection tool makes switching images a doddle



ment and test it on a real CPC without fiddling around swapping the SD card back and forth.

It's a remarkably neat bit of kit, and you can even order a 3D printed case to fit it into (pictured above-left). I've had mine for a few months now and it's really changed the way I use my Plus.

So, onto the important part. How can you get your hands on one? A C4CPC will set you back €60 + shipping. To order,

drop an e-mail to c4cpc@free.fr and you'll receive an e-mail back with details regarding payment.

If you're interested in a snazzy 3D printed case for it then take a trip to <https://all3dp.com/3d-printed-cartridges-amstrad-gx4000-games-console/> where you can order a case of your choosing from a variety of colours and materials.

The GX4000 Games that weren't

So, we have a device that gives you Gigabytes upon Gigabytes of storage to put all of the Plus cartridge games you own on a single cartridge. What's the problem with that?

'I've got 24 EPROMs, but Chase HQ II: Special Criminal Investigation ain't one'

As mentioned opposite, due to the poor sales of the GX4000 and Plus machines, software publishers were loathe to embrace the new cartridge format. With cartridges being a more expensive medium than tapes or disks and having no backwards compatibility with regular CPC's, the risks were much higher and it quickly became clear that the rewards would be minimal. Truth be told, both the GX4000 and Plus machines were an absolute flop. Therefore, there were only ever around 27 games officially released on cartridge, and many of those use little to none of the machine's enhanced features apart from perhaps a few palette changes here and there or a prettier title screen.

So it's fantastic that thanks to the efforts of members of the CPC community we're seeing some classic titles converted, some even with Plus enhancements, even if it's only making use of the wider palette. There's an on-going thread on the CPCWiki forums regarding cart conversions, with new titles being released pretty much every week. More than 400 titles have already been converted to a GX4000-friendly cart format. The main change made is to ensure that the game supports play from a joypad/stick only, so that it will work on a real GX4000 which has no keyboard available. It's amazing



Stryker in the crypts of Trogan

how many games play with joystick but still require you to press '1' to start or something similar. There are also cart images available of games that used the Plus features but were only released on tape/disk, such as Fluff and Stryker & The Crypts of Trogan. Finally they've found their way home to the GX4000.

So, surely converting these old games to a cartridge format must be a complicated process? Not necessarily...

The most straight-forward way to convert a game to cartridge is using a little application called Nocard. Originally developed as No\$cart by Nocash (author of the no\$cpc emulator), it had

a few problems including the resultant .CPR files not working on an original GX4000 or 464Plus. The new version has been developed by Kevin Thacker (of Arnold emulator fame) and fixes many of the issues with the original. Unfortunately it still doesn't support most copy-protected disks (which most commercial games are on), but thanks to some naughty Long John Silver types of the past, cracked versions of most games are available on-line with the protection removed. This in itself can add some compli-

cations though. Many cracked versions of games have an intro or trainer at the start, and these either need to be removed or modified to ensure that you can pass them with joystick/joypad input alone.

We'll be running a special feature next issue on converting games for the GX4000/Plus for those of you keen on attempting this for yourselves, including removing any reliance on keyboard presses from them.

You can see from elsewhere in this fanzine that the CPC game scene is really vibrant at the moment, it would be great to see some new titles really pushing both the Plus and the cartridge format to the full extent of their capabilities. Hopefully the C4CPC will encourage that to happen as it really opens up the cartridge format to the end user.



A word of warning!

One area (not the only one mind!) where Amstrad skimped out on the GX4000 is the PSU. Therefore, you'll need a beefier PSU before hooking up a C4CPC as it requires a bit more power than a regular cart. **Don't** try to risk it without, you may end up damaging your hardware!

Next Issue....

We'll take you through the cartridge conversion process in detail, including remapping keyboard commands to the Joypad so that the game is fully GX4000 compatible.



AMSTRAD CPC 464

Paper Craft Model

I love retro and I love technology. As a kid growing up in Canada in the 1980's, I had limited access to information about the *exotic* overseas computer market. It's only through the exposure of the Internet that I have begun to explore computers from the UK, Japan and beyond.

To share in this experience, I have lovingly recreated the Amstrad CPC 464 as a paper craft for you to download and print out for yourself. Please enjoy this model and please let me know how it compares to the original.

Available in PAL *and* NTSC versions.

Get Yours FREE at: **rockybergen.com**

** For more retro inspired art, follow **rockasoo** on Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr **

GAMES ZINE



The latest goings on in the CPC gaming scene.

What an incredible year it's been for game releases on the CPC! Whilst some people were quick to write off the CPC's viability as a gaming platform back in the early 90s, here we are a quarter of a century later and the CPC has received more than 70 new releases in a single-year, around the same number that were released during the whole of the noughties! And it's not a case of quality over quantity, you only need to glance over the following pages to realise the high-standard of some of these games. Titles such as *Dooms Day Lost Echoes* & *Golden Tail* can truly stand amongst the greats of the past. The CPC games scene is truly buoyant, and perhaps only set to grow over the coming years.

So what's been driving this sudden surge in development and interest of CPC games? Well, retrogaming is a growing hobby and more and more people are taking an interest in the games and machines of the past (the NES Mini being the latest case in point). In some ways, the current gaming scene is stuck in a bit of rut with the majority of games released seeming to be sequels or remakes and it makes people take a look to see what is elsewhere. Many games for modern platforms are being done in an 8-bit style, why not go the whole hog and actually release it on an 8-bit machine as well! Another driving factor is the wealth of information and freedom of communication driven by the internet, that allows people to easily get back in touch with the CPC. There are some fantastic Facebook groups and of course, the CPC Wiki that are always welcoming new and old users. And the interest is not just limited to those who experienced Alan Sugar's finest the first time around and are looking to relive some memories, people are joining the scene whose parents were children when the 8-bit machines were in their prime. And with some great emulators available, you don't even need to hunt down the actual hardware to experience it (although we strongly recommend you do, and will be attempting a buyers guide for a future issue).

The CPC seems to be benefitting from this revival more

than most. Back in the day, it always seemed to get the hard end of the deal in terms of multi-platform releases. Too many games were quick & easy Speccy ports, instead of games that truly played to the strengths of the CPC. Luckily, there are some fantastic tools that are now available to make CPC game development easier than ever, and allow programmers to really make the hardware sing (in fact, touch upon this in our feature 'Get on the game' on page 32). The most incredible thing is how many dedicated fans there are, putting in so much time to create quality titles for minimal or no reward.

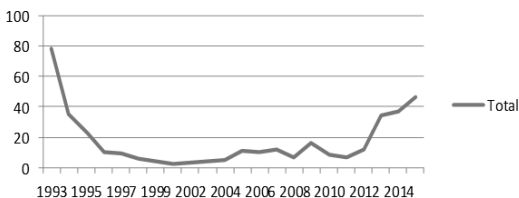
The CPC Retro Dev competition that has been running for the last few years has played a large part, bringing with it a plethora of new games and really raised the profile of the CPC gaming scene. You can take a look at some of this year's entries in more detail on page 30 and we should be covering them all in more detail in the next issue.

As well as brand new titles, we've seen games that received less than stellar ports to the CPC first-time around have seen new unofficial versions released over the past few years such as *R-Type* and *Bubble Bobble*. We've seen ports of games that never made it to the CPC. And who knows, in 2017 we may even see *Streetfighter II* and *Super Mario Bros.*!

The revival is not merely limited to digital releases, titles have seen limited edition physical editions released to great success, with a keen bunch of supporters waiting to snap up any new CPC releases.

So, it's been my pleasure to play through this selection of new releases, and the standard that they've set has been remarkably high. Since I've been away from the CPC scene for a long while, I've also been catching up with some of the games I've missed during that time such as the awesome *Orion Prime* and I may squeeze in some reviews of slightly older titles if there's enough room in amongst all of the new releases!

CPC Game Releases by Year



CPC game releases by year, 1993-2015. Information courtesy of CPC Power.



A Prelude to Chaos

Developer: EgoTrip **Requirements:** 64k minimum

Released: March 2016 **Price:** Free

EgoTrip has risen to become one of the most prolific game creators on the CPC scene, with each game improving upon the last. Earlier this year he released, top-down quest-style game called 'A Prelude to Chaos'. The game sees the player take control of Amy (a familiar heroine for those who have played any of his other games) as she goes on a mission to put a halt to the evil Cyborg Queen's plans by destroying some generators, whilst nabbing some jewels along the way.

A top-down dungeon crawling adventure, there are definitely influences here from Nintendo's The Legend Of Zelda series, in particular the colour scheme on some screens reminds me fondly of playing 'Link's Awakening DX' on my Gameboy Color with it's lovely green hues.

The graphics are nice, with some changes of palette to emphasise the different areas (dungeons?) in the game. In fact if there was an award for number of palette changes during a game this one would surely be a contender. Small glitches aside, they're pretty solid and do bring to mind a Zelda on the Gameboy, although it would have been nice to have more detail to the backdrops.

Sounds are rather basic, a chirpy tune to accompany proceedings might have been nice but the title screen music is alright. It's such a pleasure discovering the game's little nuances that I almost don't want to talk about them here, you'll just have to play the game for yourself!

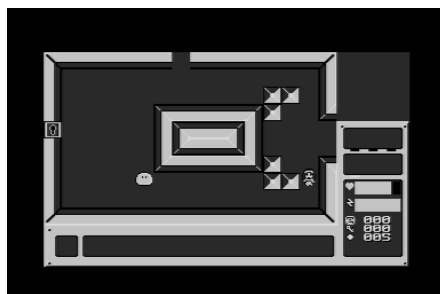
The game is quite sizable, with many areas initially blocked off behind locked doors. Finding keys opens up these areas and the delights that beyond. You'll discover items within the dungeons which provide Amy with new abilities, this opens up opportunities to explore further into the game world. The difficulty seems well balanced, and



destroying monsters will occasionally give you a cherry to restore health. Once you run out of health there is the kind option to continue, which drops you back at the starting point but with the items and jewels you have already collected.

You'll also meet some friendly character along the way, who upon breaking into their house and stealing their jewels will pay you back by imparting pearls of wisdom about the game.

It plays very well indeed and once you get into the swing of things it will likely keep you going until you reach the end.



The game drops you straight in with little information, no hand-holding like those wussy modern games....

Graphics..... 7/10

Detailed sprites, good use of four-colours with regular changes of palette to keep things fresh! However, the pseudo-3D look in the dungeons doesn't quite work.

Sound..... 6/10

Limited but functional, I would have loved some music during the game. *Turns on radio*, ah perfect!

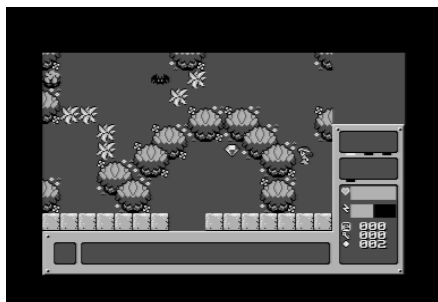
Playability..... 7.5/10

At first it may seem quite basic, but the game soon opens up to be something quite special.

Longevity..... 7.5/10

The difficult and pacing is just right to keep you going!

Overall..... 7.5/10



It's a shame this fanzine is black & white, you're missing out on some great palette swaps

Jewel Warehouse

Developer: EgoTrip **Requirements:** 64k minimum

Released: May 2016 **Price:** Free

The latest release from the ever prolific EgoTrip arrives on the CPC, and it's an absolute gem (pun intended). His previous game was 'A Prelude to Chaos' (reviewed on the adjacent page, fact fans!) so one can only assume that this game is in fact Chaos.

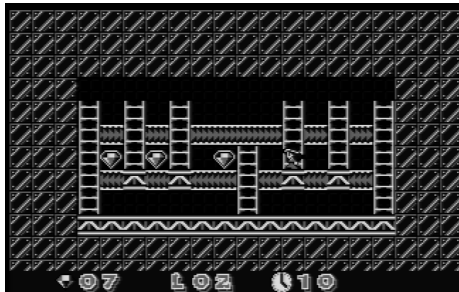
Again, starring a young lady by the name of Amy, she still hasn't gotten over her fixation with shiny stones and must proceed to collect as many Jewels as possible. She's already nabbed all of the ones that were lying in the grass and bushes, so this game sees her break and enter a warehouse to nab some more of them (some form of kleptomania perhaps?).

The first thing that grabs you before you even start is the title music, it's a good tune with an early 90s techno vibe. Things are off to a good start!

Once into the game, another good tune hits you but this is no time to break out into a little dance. There's a countdown timer ticking down on-screen and it means business. You can tell from the off that this is going to be quite a strict game time-wise, with even the first level giving you a mere twenty-something seconds to complete it.

The concept is straight forward, nab all of the gems as quickly as you can and then dash for the exit that will appear. Given the strict time limits there's not much time for procrastination, you'll need to think on your feet when trying to work out your route through the level. Luckily, if you do fail to complete the level before the timer expires you can retry the level. A concession for the 'soft' modern gamer perhaps who's used to such leniency in the latest console titles. The game also lets you start from any level.

Records for each level are judged by the amount of time remaining at the end of each level. You may think that you've done well on a level, but to earn the bonus crystal you will need at least 10 seconds remaining on the clock. It provides a



You're in a warehouse filled with lots of jewels. Don't be too hard on young Amy, you'd fill your pockets too...

great incentive to revisit levels and try to better your previous score.

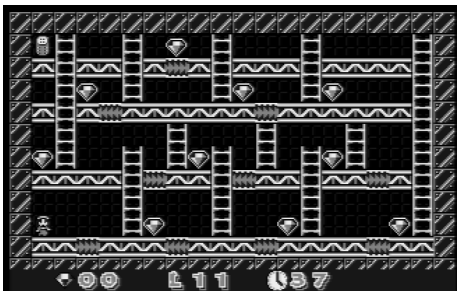
At first the levels are straight forward, but before too long a variety of obstacles and mechanisms are introduced such as one-way conveyor belts, sliding blocks and fires. Luckily, some power-ups are introduced alongside them to help you deal with the problems that the levels throw at you. As you get deeper into the game, you'll find yourself taking more attempts to get each level right – but you'll also find that your brain switches into what I like to call 'ultra super puzzle solving mode', where you can just glance at a puzzle and know how it should be solved.

There's a decent challenge on offer here with a grand total of 42 levels to get through. Completing them all is one thing, but getting that bonus crystal on each one is another thing entirely and will keep you occupied for some time.

Controls are spot-on and like EgoTrip's previous game it looks the part with its detailed Mode 1 graphics and good use of palette changes. Some colour combinations work better than others, I find the pink and blue combo particularly alluring.

It's another cracking release, and almost certainly stands as the author's best attempt yet. Fans of platform puzzlers need to play this game. Everyone else should too!

James



Graphics..... 8/10

Takes the bar set by A Prelude to Chaos and raises it.

Sound..... 8/10

Really good tunes.

Playability..... 8.5/10

Like all good puzzle games it grabs you quickly by the balls....

Longevity..... 8/10

And won't let go, forcing you into having 'oh, just one more go'.

Overall..... 8/10

Golden Tail

Developer: Juan J. Martinez

Requirements: 64k minimum **Released:** August 2016

Website: www.usebox.net/jjm/golden-tail/

That pesky Shogun, he's always up to no good! What has he gone and done now you may ask? He's only gone and stolen the Golden Tail (some sort of mysterious stone) and used its power to besiege Osaka Castle. What a nonce! With the pieces of the stone spread around the castle, it's up to ninja spy Kitsune to save the day and collect all 30 pieces to put the Golden Tail back together. Hoorah for Kitsune, we're saved! Erm, well not quite yet... You must take on the role of Kitsune in the game and collect those pieces. Not feeling so cocky now then, eh?

Luckily, you have the power of 'Kōga Magic' on your side. This allows Kitsune to completely disappear for a short period of time. Since ninjas make their living out of being all sneaky and stuff, this is undoubtedly a handy skill to have, especially as Kitsune seems to have forgotten to pack his katana for this particular adventure. So, without so much as a shuriken to assist, you must find all of the pieces whilst avoiding the enemies who are out to stop you. Rather handily, whilst invisible, enemies won't hurt you and you can also jump higher and move faster (which you'll soon discover can be both a curse and a blessing at times!).

As you've probably noticed, there's a bit of a Japanese theme to the game and this extends beyond merely the story, characters and graphics. The gameplay harks back to 1980s NES classics such as Castlevania and feels like the sort of game we should have been getting if publishers weren't so keen on pushing out rushed licensed games and cheap Spec-y ports.

The learning curve is steep at first, this isn't the sort of game that will ease you in gently and certainly don't go ex-

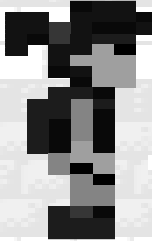


pecting to sit down and complete it on your first attempt. But to me, this is exactly how games should be. Trial and error will soon teach you the best ways to use your powers and time your jumps, and you'll find yourself getting further and further into the game on each attempt. Prepare yourself for frequent 'game over' messages but don't be too hard on yourself, it's all part of the learning process. There are a variety of different enemies that you will encounter, each with their own characteristics and behaviour and you'll soon develop strategies for coping each type, it's quite clever the way the game brings this out of you. It's a refreshing change from blasting everything in sight, and goes to show that avoidance is in no way a wimps way out! The controls

are fully customisable and the game played well in both WinAPE and on an actual CPC, although the controls felt a bit tighter on the real hardware so that's the way to play if possible. Regarding the controls, mastering the art of jumping and using the magic simultaneously can take a little bit of practice but is fine once you get used to it. I found that keyboard controls worked best for me, but you may find joystick preferable.

Although the level of difficulty may seem high, it is not simply masking a short game. There is plenty of substance here to keep you occupied for some time, in fact it's mighty impressive that Juan has managed to squeeze a game such as this with so many screens into a mere 64K.

The visuals speak for themselves (although I suspect the miniscule black & white representations on these pages will fail to do them justice!), it's certainly a gorgeous looking game. For some reason the art style reminds me of early 90s Titus



Ah, another key! I like keys! But how do I get down there?



It's so pretty, oh so pretty, it's so pretty, and witty, and gaaayyyy!

Software games such as Titus the Fox and Super Cauldron which is no bad thing as far as CPC comparisons go. The Mode 0 graphics are executed very well, and suit the theme of the game, although the main character does blend into some of the backdrops at times due to similar colours being used (perhaps not as much of a problem in a game where you spend half of your time not visible at all). Most importantly, everything is silky smooth and there is no slowdown apparent, even with multiple enemies on-screen. The aural side of things is also pleasing. The title music is enjoyable and a mix of the theme is also used in-game to accompany the sound effects.

Overall, I think that this is undoubtedly one of the highlights of 2016 so far for me (in terms of CPC game releases at least!). Unashamedly old-school and unforgiving, it's a testament to Juan's talents and stands as one of the most polished titles released in recent years. It plays really well and gives you all sorts of pleasurable sensations from a playing session. A treat for all of the senses then, and certainly something to show to those people who say the CPC isn't capable of decent games (you know the type). Golden Tail can proudly stand among the classic CPC games of old. Bravo!

James

Stop the press! [What, again?! No wonder this fanzine is so late! - The readers]. A limited edition physical release of Golden tail is out now and it looks gorgeous.

Check out <http://www.polyplay.xyz> to grab yours now!



Graphics..... 9/10

Great use of colours to offset the low resolution, the CPC at its finest.

Sound..... 8/10

Thumping theme tune and good in-game sounds

Playability..... 9/10

Frustrates and rewards in just the right quantities.

Longevity..... 8.5/10

Challenging enough to keep you coming back for some time, but still leaves you wanting more.

Overall..... 9/10

Interview with the developer

We chat to 8-bit development master, Juan J. Martinez aka Reidrac, to get the lowdown on the game development process.

Tell us a little bit about your background and how you got into developing games for retro platforms, in particular the CPC?

I've been programming since I was 13, starting with a ZX Spectrum +2A at home. Also the last year of secondary school we had Amstrad CPC 6128 (monochrome monitors), when computers (or "programming" back then) were introduced in some Spanish schools as an extracurricular subject.

Over the years I've been interested in game development on and off, not being very successful at finishing things. The last time it started itching I joined some game jams, until in 2014 did the "one game a month" challenge and the last three games I made were ZX Spectrum games. That was my first contact with retrogaming.

I don't remember exactly why I got interested in the CPC. If I recall correctly I listened to a podcast about 8-bit wars and there was that one guy selling a CPC in ebay near home; besides back then I thought that being a Z80 based machine I could recycle a lot of the things I knew about the speccy (which is not a lot, by the way).



Turns out that the CPC is a very interesting computer, and it's a shame that it was quite underused back in the day.

What tools/languages do you use to develop games on the CPC?

I develop my games C, mostly. It is a high level language that allows writing complex things in a short period of time, and I can add some Z80 assembler when I need to optimise and make things go as fast as possible; which is not very often. The SDCC C compiler generates good code overall, or at least as good as I can write myself by hand.

Speed of development is very important to me because this is a hobby for my free time, so I don't feel like spending days writing assembler when the same code in C takes me a couple of hours.

I also like building my own tools when I think they can simplify things, and in that case I tend to use Python. For example, if the game includes a map, I draw the map with an application called "tiled". Then I write a Python script to encode the map data into structures that I can use easily from C.

Finally I use an emulator. I can compile and test in short cycles, and if something goes wrong, the emulator has a nice debugger that I can use to see where my code is crashing.

How does developing on the CPC compare to other 8-bit machines and/or more modern platforms? Do you enjoy the challenge of working to the limitations of older machines?

The basics are more or less the same, because concepts such as the game loop, entity systems, frame rates, etc don't change between modern platforms and 8-bit machines.

The 8-bit platforms have limitations in RAM, CPU, frame rate, etc; and for me it is usually matter of doing it, then doing it fast, and when I can't go faster, try doing less... until I have what I want.

I think the limitations are a good thing. "One game a month" added a time limitation, and without that my PC projects could linger forever.

The CPC is a lot of fun to develop for, especially in mode 0 (all the colours!), but it is also hard and easy to try to do too many things and end with something that is painfully slow.

Golden Tail has obvious influences from traditional Japanese folklore, is this something that is a particular interest of yours and what inspiration did you take from other works? (books, film, anime, games etc.)

I watch some anime series and movies every now and then, but more than a particular interest I think is about finding the right pitch for the game so all pieces fit together.

I spend some time reading Wikipedia pages of about Japanese ghost stories and their monsters and I got a lot of inspiration from there.

Another source of inspiration are 8-bit console games. There are lots of good ideas you can borrow from them that will work just fine in a CPC game. Someone asked me on Twitter if Kitsune was a Belmont! That's a good compliment, isn't it?

Your work ethic and throughput is astounding, even releasing a game every single month during 2014, and Golden Tail was released ahead of the original release date (whilst being extremely polished). What's the secret to your success?

For me the hardest part is to get started. In Golden Tail all the folklore research helped me to start putting things together and experiment with the "ninja magic" mechanic. Then I made a rough plan of what could be the game, amount of screens, tilesets, enemies, etc.

After that I think is half having fun and half moving forward until it's done.

One of the most important things I learnt with "one game a month" is to get the projects to a "good enough" point where I can consider them finished, because scoping is really hard and I'm really bad at it. With the restrictions of the old 8-bit machines is easy: when you run out of memory, that's all folks!

Are you able to give us a hint on what we can expect from you in the near future?

I've been working on a hardware project to produce a PCB for a Sega Master System cartridge, which hopefully will be my next 8-bit platform (Z80 again!); but this is something I plan to finish perhaps next year.

I'm also thinking about the CPC Retro Dev, so I may submit a game.

And finally, which recent CPC game has impressed you the most and why? (recent in CPC terms being the last 10 years ;))

I'm a SHMUP fan and Star Sabre was the first game I played on my CPC, and I was quite impressed. I didn't know a CPC could do that! Any Paul Kooistra game in the genre is highly recommended.

Recently I've found Jewel Warehouse quite nice, especially the level design.

Not just a 'Juan' trick-pony (sorry... honestly!)

You may remember Juan from the superb 'Return of Traxtor' which was released last year, a Speccy port that showed exactly how Speccy ports should be done. He followed this up with Space Pest Control, his entry in #CPCRetroDev2015 which came an impressive 7th in the competition. You'll find a peak at his potential entry for 2016 on page 31.

Whilst a relative newcomer to CPC game development, Juan has an impressive portfolio of releases across multiple platforms. The original 'Legend of Traxor' was released for the Speccy, as well as receiving a Gameboy themed PC port (right—why not an actual Gameboy release?), and he's released plenty of games since.

Incidentally, Return of Traxtor is now available as a physical release, €8.75 on a CPC/Speccy dual-format cassette from matrannet.net.



CoolBox

Developer: Morri

Requirements: BASIC 1.1

Released: June 2016

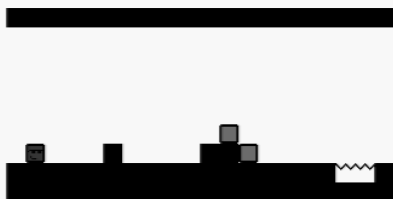
Website: n/a



I didn't realise that Camelot had caves. And that those caves are controlled by a devious dragon. And I certainly didn't realise that the devious dragon is some sort of puzzle master who could give Professor Layton a run for his money. The kingdom desperately needs a hero to end his reign of puzzle-based terror. And apparently there's only one hero cool enough to try. That valiant hero's name is.... Coolbox!?! (and he's great to take on picnics).

Our hero (who looks like Cool Spot after meeting a car-crusher) must reach the door at the end of each level, with the ultimate goal of reaching the aforementioned dragon. This is achieved by shifting the boxes that are handily lying around on each level so that they provide a clear path. Controls are straight-forward; left moves left, right moves right and space picks up the box directly in front of you. The game is based on a well-known calculator game called Block Dude (more on that below), which I hadn't heard of previously (but I've now had a play with), and also reminds me of BoxBoy! on the Nintendo 3DS (which I've played considerably) which takes the concept and expands it further.

There are 10 levels in total, and these present quite a challenge to play through (mostly in a good way!). Morri again



shows his knack for straight-forward, pure gameplay and strong level design. You'll find yourself thinking that's you've not been given enough blocks, but you simply need to find a more effective way of using them.

Impressively, the game is written purely in Locomotive BASIC. Unfortunately this does show slightly with the speed of the game at times, and it's slow nature can occasionally be frustrating. Some of the later puzzles can take some time, as they involve shifting blocks back and forwards through the level. In frustration I did find myself foolishly hammering the left and right keys with the end result of moving too far to my own death, and then having to restart the level again.

The graphics are simple as you can see, but the minimalist style works really well with this game. All in all, it's a rather fun game and definitely worth a play if you're fond of smart puzzle games. A remarkable demonstration of the flexibility of the CPC's BASIC interpreter.

James

Graphics..... 6/10

Ultra-minimalistic, a good lesson in less is more.

Sound..... 7/10

Lovely title and in-game tunes and good sound effects.

Playability..... 7/10

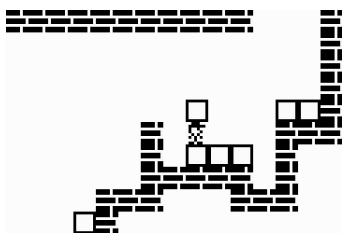
A great concept that's easy to get to grips with. You'll be having fun in no time.

Longevity..... 6/10

10 levels with incremental difficulty will occupy you for a while, although the slowness may frustrate later on.

Overall..... 6.5/10

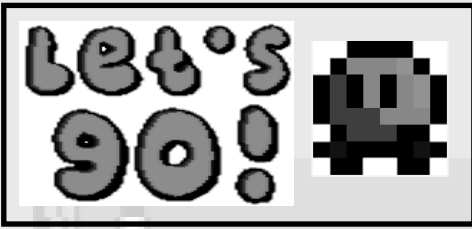
A chip off the old block



Maths lessons can be pretty boring, truth be told. It's no surprise then that somebody found a better use for the graphical calculators that the rich kids had in class. Back in the days before smart-phones were ubiquitous, Block Dude was what was keeping students distracted during lessons the world over. Developed by Brandon Sterner and originally released in October 1999 for Texas Instruments series of calculators, it

was coded in Z80 Assembly and the source is actually available on-line if anyone fancies a quick and dirty port of the original (although I prefer Morri's version to be honest!)

While we're on the subject of calculator games, it's impressive what's available with clones of Wolf 3D, Tetris, Mario and many more. Later TI models featured a 68000 rather than a Z80 and higher screen resolutions.



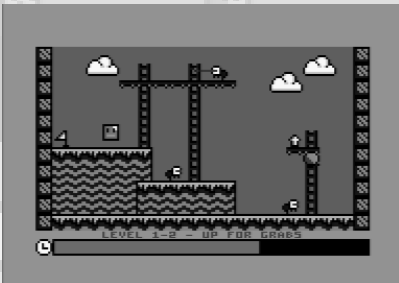
Developer: Morri (Bearded Dragons)

Requirements: 128k only **Released:** October 2015

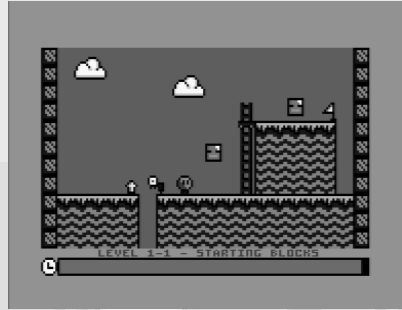
This is a game that makes no great effort to conceal its inspirations. Fans of 'Relic Rush' on mobile platforms will find the gameplay style instantly familiar, there's the faintest whiff of Lemmings about proceedings (or perhaps more 'Les Mings'), whilst the central character bears more than a passing resemblance to a certain pink blob from Nintendo. As for the title music, it might sound vaguely familiar to those who've played the James Pond sequel, Robocod. And is it just me or does the tileset hark back to Sonic's Green Hill zone?

So, on with the game itself. The player is given the vast responsibility of getting the little character (we'll call him Kirkby, after the town in the North-West of England) to the flagpole at the end of each level, utilising only the power of the space bar to pause Kirkby at any time to avoid the on-screen obstacles. Don't be fooled by the straightforward control scheme however, there's quite a challenge that lays ahead.

The game is split into four worlds, each consisting of several levels with a time limit that carries over from one to the next. There are no lives, if you get hit you start the level again but the time limit is ever diminishing, carrying on from where it was when you died. Once the timer runs out it's 'Game Over' and you're back to square one. At the end of each world, you will be ranked on how well you've done, receiving a Gold, Silver or Bronze rating depending on how much time you have



It's lucky that someone left all these ladders lyin' around? That's not a lion, that a gir- never mind.



Could this game transport you to Dreamland?
(geddit?... Never mind, *sigh*)

remaining. The first couple of worlds are relatively forgiving with the difficulty ramping up a little after that, the later worlds may take quite a few goes to get right.

Several times I've screamed out frustration as I tried to squeeze through a rapidly shrinking gap, but I suspect fault lies not with the game but rather a little closer to home. The collision detection seems pretty spot on, if only the same could be said for my reactions and judgement. The game is relatively short and sweet, but the difficulty is pretty well balanced. I would have liked to have seen more variety in the graphics and obstacles between worlds, and indeed more levels, but perhaps Morri is saving those for an eventual sequel? (fingers crossed)

The graphics are simple and bright Mode 0 and do the job well with everything moving smoothly (a testament to both CPC Basic 3 and the coding skills of Morri).

All in all, this is definitely a game worth checking out and I love seeing the transition of concepts on modern platforms making their way across to the CPC. Long may it continue! (Plants vs Zombies next please).

James

Graphics..... 8/10

Bright, colourful and fun. Well suited to the game.

Sound..... 7/10

Cracking rendition of the Robocod theme from the late, great Richard Joseph.

Playability..... 7/10

A simple concept that quickly grabs you and demands 'just one more go'.

Longevity..... 6/10

You will get through the game relatively quickly, but you can always go back and try to beat your ratings!

Overall.....

6.5/10

HEROES RESCUE!

Developer: Javy Fernandez (Defecto Digital)

Requirements: 64K minimum **Released:** August 2016

Website: <http://www.defectodigital.com/>

Another game from the hotspot of CPC development, Spain, 'HEROES RESCUE!' (and no I haven't accidentally left caps-lock turned on) is the new game from Javy Fernandez of Defecto Digital. Before I go further, let me just say on behalf of the author that any likeness to any well-known cartoon characters (both living or dead, or the living dead) are almost certainly entirely coincidental. And with the legalities out of the way let's get on with review.

You begin with 3 lives, and what appears to everyone's favourite party dude, Michaelangelo trapped in the top-right of the screen (or is it Raphael? I think it's Raphael....). Losing a life takes you back to the start of each single screen level, lose all of your lives and its 'Game Over' and you're back to the start. Simple enough then...?

Even after collecting all of the things (jewels?), he still appeared to be trapped. Ah, but jumping up to him does rescue him. Good stuff! On to level 2. One of the enemies appears to clip straight through the platform. Actually, what is that enemy? Has one of the aliens from Space Invaders got himself caught in a piece of the platform tile?

The game initially appears to be silent, but collecting a jewel gives a squiggly noise. It also gives you some points. You can jump through some of the platforms, other you can't although it's not immediately obvious which are which. The ceiling of each level is certainly solid though and affects your jumping when you are near the top of the screen.



Controls are straight-forward, left and right moves (wait for it) left and right and the fire button performs a jump. It's very easy to accidentally double-jump (at least playing in an emulator), holding down the button causes you to jump continuous so may sure you just quickly tap the button. There's no height advantage to be gained from keeping it held.

Once you get used to its quirks, the game is quite playable. The engine seems to hold up well and there can be a lot of enemies on-screen without noticeable slowdown. The graphics are reasonable and the colourful, boxy look of the characters is actually quite appealing, although it wasn't always obvious who I was rescuing. Was that Batman? He's obviously not been well. And is that supposed to be Spiderman? Maybe Phil Spiderman. Ah, that's definitely Wolverine. Oh, were they all supposed to be Marvel characters? Is Batman even a Marvel character? Eventually I reached a level I just couldn't get past. Spiderman had got himself stuck and for some reason I just couldn't find a way to get to him.

It's fair to say, that although I admire the effort that Javy has gone to with this game, I wasn't particularly enamoured with it. Keep at it Javy, your masterpiece could be just around the corner - unfortunately this isn't it.

James

Graphics..... 5.5/10

Cartoony—I think that's what they were going for.

Sound..... 2/10

No music and rather unpleasant sound effects.

Playability..... 5/10

Initially appealing...

Longevity..... 4/10

Which soon gives way to boredom and frustration.

Overall..... 4.5/10

Hold it in your hands...

Impressively, Javy has released the game in not one, not two but three physical editions. €13 will see you take home a disc version in a DVD-type box, €11 for a cassette in a similar box or €9 for a version in a standard cassette box.

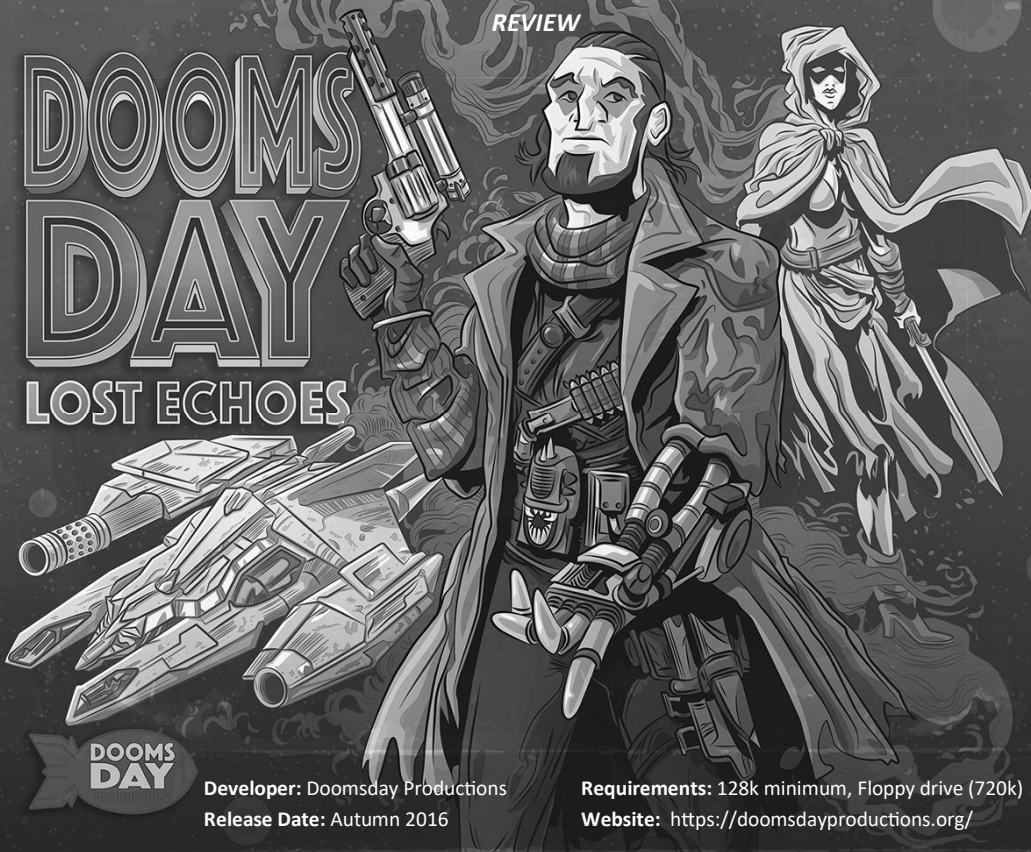
How's that for choice?

Visit <https://defecto-digital-online.pswebstore.com> to check them out for yourself.



DOOMS DAY

LOST ECHOES



Developer: Doomsday Productions

Release Date: Autumn 2016

Requirements: 128k minimum, Floppy drive (720k)

Website: <https://doomsdayproductions.org/>

Before this review starts in earnest, I have a small confession to make. I'm not a big player of adventure games. When the kids at school were boasting about Sonic this and Mario that, Mode 7 and Blast Processing, it just wouldn't have been cool to harp on about The Guild of Thieves and how advanced its text parser was. I was already behind the curve by owning a CPC, I couldn't be seen to put myself down further. If I was going to play Amstrad games then it would have to be something cool like Turtles. Nevertheless, I did attempt to play a few adventures. I recall one where I played as a snowball, my 9 year-old self getting more and more frantic as I proceeded to melt with each passing scene. Suffice to say, it didn't end well. I played Five on a Treasure Island and considered myself at an advantage, being familiar with the source material. However, my Famous Five are probably still stuck on that blasted island, never finding the treasure and going home. They would probably have long ago resorted to cannibalism to survive, dropping in numbers until only one out five remained. Or perhaps Timmy the dog ventured into a cave, got bitten by rabies-infested bats and proceeded to maul the rest of the gang? Who knows?

Anyway, in this particular adventure you play as neither a

snowball nor a Dick. In fact you take on the role of Mike, a hardened bounty hunter turned missing person investigator. He doesn't melt, nor does he have an Aunt called Fanny. In fact, he has received a request to hunt down a missing person aboard an abandoned space station. Now, I've seen enough science-fiction movies to be heading in the opposite direction as quickly as possible, but no, not Mike, he heads straight there driven by the thought of some hard cold cash. I can only guess he didn't have a telly or visit the cinema growing up, and is therefore oblivious to the usual sci-fi tropes.

Upon loading the game for the first time, the first thing that hits you is the gorgeous Mode 1 visuals. This is no GAC game with some crude etch-a-sketch style drawings, some proper effort has gone in here. You'll soon discover that there is also quantity to go along with that quality; with every location meticulously drawn, it's obvious that a considerable amount of time and effort has gone into this game. And the images aren't just there for a bit of eye candy. As you delve further into the game you will discover that the beautiful pixel art plays an important role in some of the games puzzles, and helps to further the story. There are lots of little details in the images to watch out for, giving service for fans of the CPC, gaming and sci-fi movies in general.



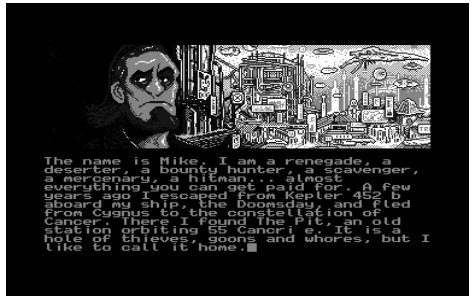
Boldly go where no CPC user has gone before...

Naturally in an adventure game, you want to fully explore your surroundings and this is when it becomes apparent that the same attention to detail is also present in the narrative. Normally looking at benign objects results in some sort of 'that's not important'-esque backlash. Not so in Droids, its impressive how well described the world around you is and each location serves a purpose and this really helps to give a sense of immersion that can be missing from some other adventures.

So, the game sets the scene well but how does it play? The puzzles are clever, particularly with the use of passwords to gain access to devices within the game. Although it can be tricky in places, and there will be times where you no doubt find yourself stuck, nothing defies logic and you'll often kick yourself when you eventually discover the solution to the puzzles. I got stuck on a particular puzzle for far too long, only to have the solution pointed out instantly by my wife upon eyeing it for the first time. So it's the sort of game where sometimes a second pair of eyes (and brain) comes in useful.

The parser is pretty sophisticated so a quick read of the manual is highly recommended, even for the more experienced adventurers among you and it also sets the scene nicely for the game itself.

As with most adventure games, sometimes it not what you want to do, but how you attempt to do it that can be the problem. It's worth attempting to phrase things in a different way if you're pretty sure of what you need to do, but things aren't working as expected. It's not really a failure of the



Stare in awe at the gorgeous Mode 1 visuals!

game, but more with the limited interpretation of language that can be done on an 8-bit platform.

As the game is HUGE, the manual suggests making a map, advice which I promptly decided to ignore, only to rue my decision a short time later. At least to begin with, objects are found relatively close to where you need to use them, but you can only carry a certain amount of items so you will have to drop items at some point and remembering where you left them can be useful!

As you progress through the game, the story begins to unfold, revealing more regarding the mystery of the abandoned spaceship and what happened aboard it. Perhaps in other media such as movies and TV, you may consider the plot a little tired and clichéd, and it can be hard to empathise with the lead character but it's not like there's been a snowstorm of sci-fi text adventures as of late so I can be a little forgiving here. And I do love clichéd sci-fi movies...

There's no sound, which you may think would be a negative, but 'dark & atmospheric' is not a particular type of sound that the old AY excels at so perhaps it's a blessing in disguise. It gives you freedom to pop your headphones on and stick on whatever soundtrack you see fit. Clint Mansell's theme for Moon seemed appropriate, and proceeded to give me the willies and really emphasise the feeling of loneliness and isolation. If that's your bag then I can highly recommend it. Like a good book, text adventures have an ability to transport you into another world, one crafted by the author and Droidsday certainly succeeds. With the right soundtrack



it can prove incredibly immersive.

Technically, this game is of a size rarely seen before on the CPC, certainly as far as text adventures go, and therefore requires a floppy drive supporting a 720K ROMDOS format (a 3.5" drive or a floppy emulator will both do) and things are a little smoother to get going with two drives. The game does take a little while to load as it has to boot CP/M first, and there is loading in between scenes due to the graphics, but it doesn't detract from the game itself and loading times can be reduced if played in an (excuse the cuss word) emulator.

I won't say too much more so as not to give away any spoilers, but what I can say is that this is a thoroughly enjoyable game that you owe it to yourself to play. Well written, great to look at, lengthy and with a well-balanced difficulty level that rewards the curious, I can't recommend this game highly enough. And do you know what? Text adventures ARE pretty cool after all.

James

Graphics..... 9/10

The detailed Mode 1 graphics really set the scene. Some locations are stronger than others but the standard is high throughout.

Sound..... ?/10

As good as whatever album you stick on to accompany it. Just don't put on The Saturdays.

Playability..... 8.5/10

Well balanced, well written and well good. Adventure fans will love it, everyone else may well too.

Longevity..... 9/10

A lengthy game indeed, and it will keep drawing you back until you finally reach the end.

Overall..... 9/10

Interview with Doomsday Productions

Lead programmer, Alberto Riera kindly takes the time to speak to us about the game.

Tell us a little about Doomsday Productions. Who is involved and what is your background with the CPC?

Doomsday Productions was born one evening when Dani (the graphic artist) and me (the humble programmer) suddenly decided that it would be great to create an Amstrad game. We are both die-hard gamers and we had the idea looking at some of the latest scene productions. We thought that it would be cool to try ourselves and see what would happen.

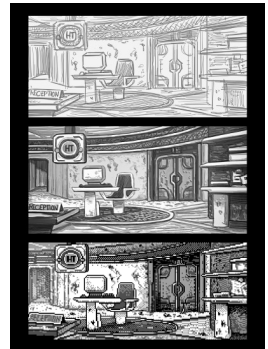
Initially we were only Dani and me. I set up quite a complex universe and background for the story and then we thought about a suitable main character. With this, Dani drew some concepts and we made a plot for the adventure that was rather simple. Here is when Gryzor stepped in and started suggesting lots of new things and puzzles. We found those ideas very cool and, suddenly, the game grew up into a full scale production!

Over the time, many other members of the scene joined us and did great things. Floppysoftware created a super cool font selector, Rhino made the Amsdos loader to show the loading screens in mb0, MiguelSky gave a lot of technical support... and there were a lot of other people testing the game, correcting the texts... It was a shared effort.

Why the Amstrad? Well, that was my fault. I am a big Amstrad fan since my parents bought me a CPC 6128 in 1987. I was 7 when I received the computer and I kept using it every day until the end of 1995, when I finally bought a PC. The Amstrad was the only option I considered from the very beginning. Funnily, this was also great for Dani because he did not have to worry about any attribute clash.

What compelled you to create a text adventure, is it a favourite genre of yours? What other text adventures do you admire?

Yes, to be honest it is a text adventure because is my favourite genre. I enjoyed them massively when I was a kid and I always wanted to make one. My favourite text adventures are those made by Aventuras AD, a Spanish company. I had lots of fun with all of them. Many years later I discovered how great the adventures made in UK were. Some of them, like The Guild of Thieves, are truly impressive even by today's standards. Sadly, when I was I kid my English was pretty poor and these games were not available in any shop around.



The development from concept drawing to in-game graphics, with the final result remarkably close.



The game is created in PAWS, an adventure toolkit from the 1980s. Why did you choose this tool and what are the positives/negatives?

I think that even today PAWS is actually a great tool: very well documented (thanks to the official manuals and the vast amount of articles about it), powerful and very flexible. Another advantage is that PAWS is available for the Amstrad CPC, Amstrad PCW, Spectrum... and porting a game between these platforms is actually trivial. It would be dead easy to create an Amiga, Atari ST or MS DOS version as well, since the DAAD (a sort of custom super-PAWS created for Aventuras AD) is also available for these systems. We do not have any plans for a port, but having experience with PAWS would allow me to easily write a game for many other machines. I also like the graphics patch that comes with this adventure creator. It allows you to include lots of pixel art that is loaded in real time when you are playing and the amount of graphics is only limited by the storage capacity of your device. Finally, PAWS runs in CP/M and any patch developed for the operating system (for instance to take advantage of RAM expansions or massive storage solutions) can be automatically used with the tool. If CP/M was able to recognize 512KB of RAM or a device like the X-MASS, you could immediately create much bigger and faster games.

On the negative side, games made with PAWS need to be compiled in a database format that is only readable by the PAWS interpreter. This interpreter, embedded in the executable file of the adventure, is written in C and could be actually faster than it is. It is also not possible to compress the graphics with external tools. The graphics patch is great, but it was added in a rush and should be more polished.

Doomsday has obviously made quite an impression already with its beautiful Mode 1 graphics. What are the inspirations behind the look and feel of the game?

I let that part in the Dani's hands, only making suggestions about this and that, but never changing his original idea about Mike, his space ship, the Regus or how the derelict station looks. Therefore, it is better if he answer the question and I just translate what he has to say:

"Hi, that was my part! Thank you very much for your kind words about the graphics. I find pixel art wonderful and excruciating at the same time, so it is very helpful to hear nice things about your work. Regarding the inspirations, I

was not thinking in anything in particular, or maybe is that I was inspired by too many things... old arcades, classic role playing games, graphic adventures from the end of the eighties (Snatcher). Metal Slug was an inspiration as well because of its wonderful art. Regarding the atmosphere, I would say that the game has something from Alien, Blade Runner, Bioshock, Fallout... those things that are in the collective awareness of our generation. Capturing all this in our own universe was really rewarding, I just hope that the CPC scene will enjoy it at least a quarter than we did".

The development of the game has taken place in full view of the CPC community via the CPC Wiki. How has their feedback helped to shape the game?

The great Amstrad community was essential all along, and the game vastly improved with the suggestions, support and help of many members. Lots of people helped to shape the adventure: testing it, correcting texts, suggesting changes or creating custom parts of code. Without their attention and effort, we would have never get this far in the development.

What have been the biggest challenges in developing the game?

Living in a world where the day is only 24 hours long! Making this game a reality has been a long journey and we had to go on with our lives as well. It was very difficult to juggle everything, at least in my case. I took quite a lot of time from my sleep, I did not pay all the attention I should to my family and I had to stop gaming for months.

Any pieces of advice for people wanting to get started in game development on the CPC?

Only two: do not rush your production and only bite what you can chew. Lots of great and promising projects are abandoned because they are overambitious. It is better to be realistic and start something you can finish.

And finally... In the CPC scene you're known as 'IICI-IEII'. How exactly is that pronounced? Is it like 'icey eh' or 'itchy eye'? Are you a hay fever sufferer?

It does not have a proper pronunciation!

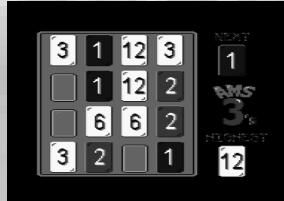
Actually, those "I" are meant to be vertical bars and symbols. The real nickname is actually [[C]-[E]], although most of the time I cannot use it because it causes a lot of trouble with forums, web accounts, etc. Funnily, over the years many people started calling me CHE because the original "shape" of the alias somehow resembles that word. The itchy eye seems fitting too, I actually have some hay fever in spring and allergy to the dust, very noticeable when I open an old computer!



A small sample from



464crusader



Amsthrees



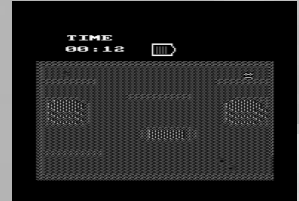
Banana's Recovery



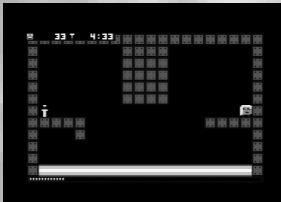
Elliot



El Reino Del Color



Firewall Wars



Hair Boy



Harrier Revenge



Hero Magic



Maze Adventure



Next Track



Outlaws



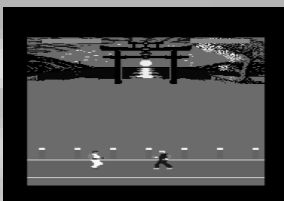
Ring Ring Warrior



Robobit Game



Sidegun

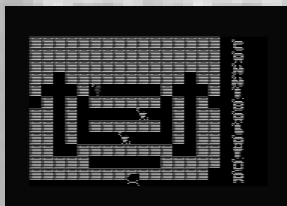


The Last Fighter



The Legend Of Anubis

#CPCRetroDev2016



Cannibaltor



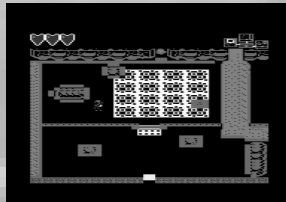
Dead Warrior



Dragon Attack



Fitzroy and the Power Wells



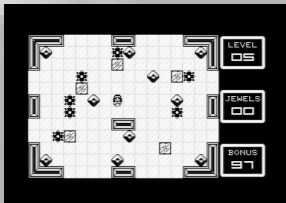
GeNe



Hacienda Campaña



Hire Hare



Ice Slider



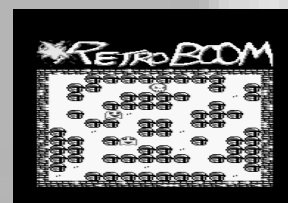
Killfield



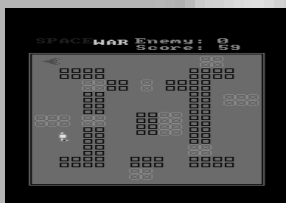
Pingu Soccer



Project X



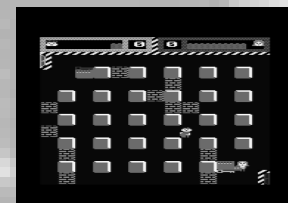
RetroBoom



SpaceWar



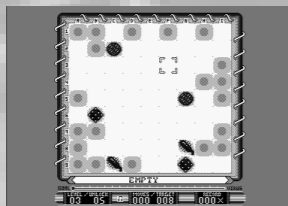
The Great Battles of Magistar



The Grenades Conquest



TradWorld



Virus Dog

Get On The Game!

Your brief guide to game development on the CPC in 2016



So, you've pulled the CPC out of the loft for the first time in years, dusted off your joystick and checked out some of the fantastic CPC games that have been released over the past few years. Or just squinted in awe at the murky black& white screenshots in this very fanzine. But perhaps playing games isn't enough and you want to do your bit and create a CPC game of your very own?

Luckily, it's never been easier to get started in game development, thanks to the fantastic array of tools that are now available offering the ability to develop and test your production in the comfort of your PC. Whilst I don't profess to

be an expert on the matter (the last game I coded was a Snake-clone in Visual Basic about 15 years ago that had an irritating bug where it crashed if you were too good), I've been having a snoop at how the latest wave of CPC releases are being developed and the tools currently available.

After reading this brief guide, don't feel like you're alone. There's some great documentation available on the web and some incredibly supportive types over on the CPCWiki forums should you have any questions.

Get your code on!

Traditionally, if you wanted to exploit the full power of the CPC then coding in Assembly Language was the only real option. These days though, there's some great compilers and development environments that mean that you can get some fantastic results coding in the language of your choice, even if that means BASIC!

CPC BASIC 3

Utilised by Morri for the game 'Let's Go!' (reviewed this very issue), CPC Basic 3 serves two main purposes: An Integrated Development Environment (IDE) for editing the code and a compiler to generate machine code of your BASIC program. It is Windows-based so will require that Microsoft Operating System, but can also be used with Linux or Mac OS via Mono and Wine respectively.

The development environment will look instantly familiar, being a clone of the CPC Locomotive BASIC interface, only with some useful editing features such as full copy+paste. If you'd rather, you can use another editor to create the code and then import in.

The output is very flexible offering options of a straight Binary file to load on the CPC, Assembler code that can then be modified before assembling to a Binary file, ccz80 code which is a relatively new C-style language for 8-bit Micros and can compile to Binary, and finally .CDT, .DSK and .SNA images to load directly in an emulator. In fact, the package integrates the CPCE emulator allowing you to test your code instantaneously.

In general it is compatible with the existing Locomotive BASIC on the CPC, but there may be some changes required to your code due to the different way CPC Basic 3 handles things, particularly with regards to negative numbers. The

website gives a really good explanation of the differences, and adapting existing code to work with the compiler should be relatively straight-forward but will vary on a case by case basis.

The results speak for themselves though, and you should see a massive speed boost in the execution of your BASIC programs in comparison to the regular interpreted Locomotive BASIC. The compilation is so effective that in some cases the speed can rival that of native Assembler. The firmware routines being called such as x & x will still function at the same speed, but the logic that pulls it all together will be much faster. You're not limited to the firmware routine though, 'Let's GO!' makes use of Sean McManus's 'Easi-Sprite Driver' to draw its graphics, showing the flexibility that can be achieved with CPC Basic 3.

If your previous programming experience is mainly limited to BASIC then CPC Basic 3 provides a great platform to get into game development on the CPC.

Web: <http://www.cpcbasic.tk/>

CPCtelera

To really hit the CPC hardware, you're going to have to move away from BASIC. If you've got experience of programming in C or Z80 Assembler but limited knowledge of the CPC hardware then CPCtelera could well be a godsend. CPCtelera touts itself as an 'Astonishingly fast Amstrad CPC game engine for C and Assembler developers'. What it basically comes down to is a series of libraries, providing ready-to-use routines for things such as sprite handling, audio mixing, hardware double buffering and scrolling effects, keyboard scanning and more. It also includes utilities to generate and compile your code and tools such as Arkos Tracker and Retro Game Asset Studio for creating the sound and graphics for



your game. It's not natively a Windows application, therefore you'll need to download Cygwin to use it on a Windows PC. Since it's creator ronaldo, is the man behind the CPCRet-roDev competition it is no surprise that it has been used for many of the entries to that competition.

Web: <http://ironaldo.github.io/cpctelera/>

WinAPE

The Windows Amstrad Plus Emulator, more commonly known to its friends as WinAPE, is probably the most popular CPC emulator in use today but it also has some clever tricks up its sleeves. The built-in (MAXAM compatible) assembler is incredibly useful for quickly compiling and testing your code, as is the debugger which will help to assist you in

tracking down any glitches in your code.

Web: <https://www.winape.net/>

8BP

If you're doggedly committed to Locomotive BASIC, you could do far worse than checking out this library of RSX commands billed as 'the ultimate RSX library for games'. 8BP (8-bits of Power) offers 32 sprites with clipping, overwrite and collision detection, in-game music and much, much more. A game called Nibiru has been released using 8BP and it looks genuinely fantastic. Could it be a modern-day Sprites Alive!? I'm going to have a play over the next few weeks and I'll let you my findings in the next issue with any lucky!

Web: <https://github.com/jjaranda13/8BP>

The best CPC programming resources on the net

You can have all of the fancy development tools and environments that you like, but you're still going to come a cropper if you don't know how to program! Luckily, there are some great resources available on the internet.

<http://www.cpcmania.com> - Some cracking introductory guides to programming in C & Assembler and great source code examples.

<http://www.sean.co.uk/books/amstrad/index.shtml> - Sean McManus' BASIC tutorial and accompanying software, if you'd like to get warmed up in BASIC before attempting C or Assembly.

<http://www.cantrell.org.uk/david/tech/cpc/cpc-firmware/> - Electronic version of the unofficial firmware manual.

<http://cpctech.cpc-live.com/> - Home of the Unofficial Amstrad WWW Resource, one of the most comprehensive sources of CPC information....

The (Alex) Van Damm Chronicles - Part One

Alex turned the flat upside down for the umpteenth time. They HAD to be there somewhere. She squinted her eyes and tried to think back to the previous day. She had received the package from the bearded-man in the bar in the middle of the afternoon, but had been knocking back the single malt so as to maintain her cover and everything that happened after that had become a little hazy. Suddenly, another wave of nausea overcame her and she ran down the staircase towards the front door, bursting out onto the previously quiet Bath side-street as she projectile vomited across it. An elderly gentleman walking past holding a small iguana paused to look across at the commotion, an obvious look of disapproval upon his face. She looked up apologetically, a dribble of whisky-laced sick running down her chin.

Across the street she noticed her Citroen 2CV parked on the far side. Had she driven home last night? She couldn't remember, but the car did appear to be parked at a rather awkward angle with one wheel upon the curb. There was what looked like a bad ginger toupee caught underneath one of the wheels. 'Snuggles!' she screamed out loud. She had lost yet another cat. Could the day possibly get any worse?

She tried to focus her mind back to the task at hand. If



didn't find that month's consignment she would be in big trouble. She pulled herself together and went back up the stairs to her small flat, a run-down cesspit situated above a kebab shop.

Upon entering the flat Alex heard that ringing sound again in her ears. It had already happened a couple of times that morning. Had she taken too many pills last night or was tinnitus starting to set in? Suddenly, a realisation struck her... It was the telephone! Retrieving the handset from beneath a pile of empty fag pack packets she sheepishly raised the handset against her ear.

It was a voice from the past that she recognised only too well. 'Hello Caroline' she said, 'I didn't think I'd be hearing from you again.'

Tune in next issue for another exciting episode....

NEXT TIME IN COLOUR PERSONAL COMPUTING

As the first issue draws to a close, so we look forward to what great things lie ahead in issue 2!

- ◆ Part two of our floppy emulation feature—Adding an LCD screen to your GoTek drive.
- ◆ Our guide to cart conversions - get your favourite games up and running on the GX4000!
- ◆ Reviews of Defence, PiCroc, Cyber Chicken, Chibi Akuma, Magica, Vector Vaults and anything that gets released between now and then! Oh yeah, and we'll (attempt to) review every single game released for #CPCretrodev2016 as well!
- ◆ More on: Pinball Dreams CPC, Street Fighter II and other upcoming games.
- ◆ And all of the latest CPC related news, rumours, gossip and hearsay (possibly even heresy)



Since we're running about 4 months behind, Issue 2 of Colour Personal Computing will be published on Thursday, 13th April 2017 (rather than in December as we had originally planned!). Just in time to get the pages mucky with chocolate eggs!

To pre-order your copy now, visit <http://www.cpcfanzine.com> - you can also purchase a 4 issue subscription from £10.80, a saving of 10% off the regular price!

Competition Time!

This is your chance to win a signed copy of Lord Sugar's autobiography, 'What you see is what you get' in this fun word-search! We don't want to make things too easy for you however, so we're not going to tell you what the words are, but we will let you know that there are 17 of them, they're all vaguely CPC related and they can go in any direction (and some may be a couple of words together). Send a photo of your completed puzzle to editor@cpcfanzine.com - the first correct answer wins the prize! Unfortunately, due to the weight of the book, this competition is only open to residents of the United Kingdom.

A F V M D F E S U O M X M A M
S L Q E M R V P A R A D O S A
G R A G U S D R O L Q E L R X
V Z V A M P I O A L H F I E A
G W S B A L V Y O L J U V C M
J A O L M N P R Z T L E E T E
C Y E A S E R O A M C W R R T
V Z R S T C O L P T W S T C S
H Z U T R A D A T M B R W X Y
F I T E A F A N B F S D I O S
F D U R D I T D A D O Y N X N
I S F S G B R K L V B S S B O
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C Y W N I Y N Q S T Y F L A O
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